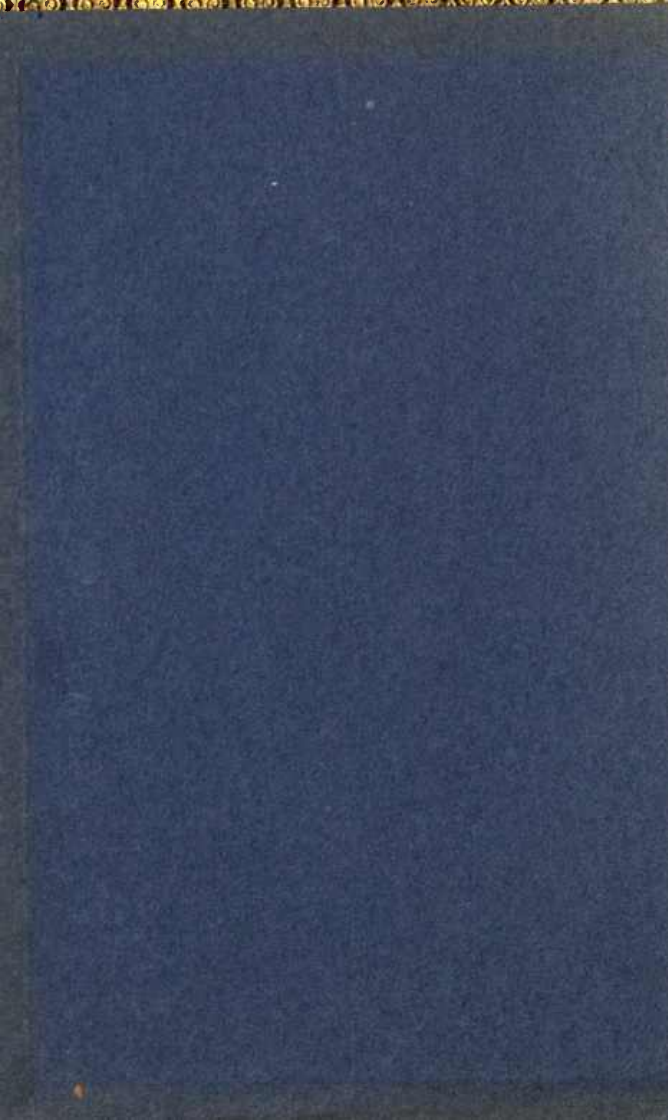
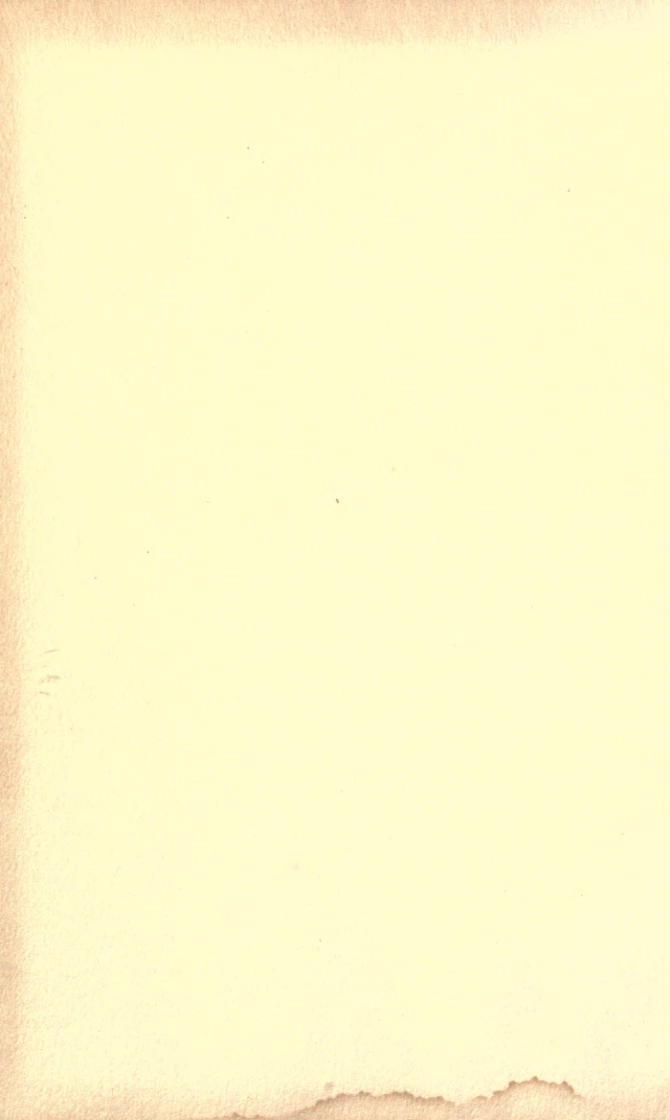


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TALES
OF
FIRENZUOLA



TALES
OF
FIRENZUOLA

Benedictine Monk of Vallombrosa

(XVIth century)

FOR THE FIRST TIME TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH



PARIS

ISIDORE LISEUX

19, Passage Choiseul

1889



PREFACE



IRENZUOLA is more than a pleasing storyteller : he is a masterly writer, who adapts a nervous style to the service of a naturally voluptuous imagination, and the pictures of which are of a colouring sparkling with vivacity. He has been praised for his not having adhered to the language such as Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch had formed it, and for having enriched his own with a host of picturesque expressions gathered at the fountain-head, namely, borrowed from the ordinary

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manner of speaking : we hear at Florence as in Paris more tropes on one market day, than during several hundred Academical sittings. His somewhat considerable work comprises a collection of Oriental Apologues entitled : *Discorsi degli Animali ; Ragionamenti d' Amore ;* two *Discourses on Women's beauty ;* two comedies, *La TrinuZIA* and *I Lucidi ;* a translation of the *Golden Ass*, by Apuleius ; poetry in which *Capitoli* slightly sketched and a few desultory pieces, appear. One of them, *Expulsion of new characters uselessly introduced into the Tuscan tongue*, is directed against the Trissino, who wanted to add to the alphabet certain parasitic letters, among others the omega. Two of these works at least were formerly turned into French and seem to have been in great vogue ; the *Discorsi degli Animali* were translated for the first time by Gabriel Cottier, under this heading : *Pleasant and Jocose discourses of Animals, with a story not less true than funny lately taken place in the city of Florence*, Lyons, 1556, 16mo, and a second time by Pierre de Larivey ; they form a part of a treatise entitled : *Two Books of Fabulous Philosophy*, Lyons, 1579, 16mo.

Brantôme (1) was acquainted with the *Discorsi delle bellezze delle donne*, at least in the following translation : *Discourses on Ladies' Beauty, taken from the Italian of Signor Agnolo Firenzuola*, by J. Pallet, Saintongeois ; Paris, 1578, 8vo. *The Golden Ass* presents this striking feature that Firenzuola, in substituting himself for the Lucius of Apuleius, appropriated to himself not only the author's inventions, but also the hero's mishaps which he takes on his own account, and this affords him the opportunity of recounting to us up to the end a smattering of his own biography and a regular genealogy of his whole family. Paul-Louis Courier, a shrewd judge of these matters, highly appreciated this translation owing to its slightly archly savour. « Without reproducing, » says he, « obscure sentences, the forgotten terms of Fra Jacopone or of Cavalcanti, Firenzuola borrows from the old Tuscan a host of ingenuous and charming

(1) « Mr. du Gua and I were once reading a small Italian book entitled *Of Beauty*, written in dialogues, by Signor Agnolo Firenzuola, the Florentine. » *Dames Galantes*. Disc. I.

expressions, and his version, in which we may say all the flowers of this admirable language are concentrated, is, in many persons' opinion, what is most finished in Italian prose. »

The *Ragionamenti d'Amore* commend themselves by the same agreeableness of style and, moreover, the Romances for which they serve as frame are so many short masterpieces of sprightly narrative and ingenious wit. This is evidently his most vivid creation, the one which assures him the greatest chance of being known and relished outside of Italy. Yet they have never been turned into French, perhaps owing to their title, which does not promise much interest; perhaps because of the too refined insipidness of the preliminaries, which but little allow us to suspect how much boldness and fantasy the author is next about to display. In imitation of Boccaccio, though with much less charm, Firenzuola supposes that a society of young ladies and gallant knights is united in a pleasant villa; they spend the time in prolonged chattings which by their object recall the quintessenced abstractions of the Courts of Love, and, having, about night-fall, chosen a Queen, as in the Deca-

meron, they relate one after another merry tales in which, by a satirical contrast, the heavenly Venus, so mystically exalted during the preliminaries, is sacrificed without the least hesitation to the earthly Venus. Perhaps this is a symbolical turning adopted by the author, to make us comprehend that pure and ideal love, though excellent in words, in conversation, has no longer any current in real life.

However witty this frame may be, it does not possess originality enough to claim much of our attention; we have therefore overlooked the metaphysical discussions at the beginning of the *Ragionamenti* and translated only the Romances which form their conclusion. We shall give a sufficient idea of the whole in stating that the scene is laid at Pozzolatico, near Florence, within the prescribed decorations of this sort of semi-allegorical compositions: terrace-walk-gardens, dashing fountains, purling streams, shady groves, meadows decked with flowers, and that the interlocutors are six in number, three gentlemen: Celso, Folchetto, Selvagio, and three ladies: Costanza Amaretta, Fioretta, Bianca. Celso is Firen-

zuola himself ; he assumes this false title in many other works of his ; he appears to have designated, under the names of Fioretta and Bianca, his sister and sister-in-law ; under that of Folchetto, Bianca's husband, his own brother, Girolamo Firenzuola. As to Costanza Amaretta, who is taken as Queen, she was a Florentine of high descent, great wit, whom Firenzuola loved with a tender love, and she died young, in the full splendour of her beauty. He conserved for her a kind of worship and, in his *Epistola in lode delle Donne*, addressed to a learned Sienese, Claudio Tolomei, after having placed her for her talents and beauty in the same rank as the most illustrious of whom ancient or modern history makes mention, Sapho, Aspasia, Cornelia, Calpurnia, Sempronia, the Marchioness of Pescara, etc., he compares her for virtues to Plato's Diotima, to Saint Monica, the mother of Saint Augustin. But notwithstanding the aureola of chastity with which he piously surrounds her form, he fails not to let her hear with attentive ear a series of recitals the principal features of which would disfigure

neither the *Moyen de Parvenir*, nor the *Dames Galantes* of Brantôme.

It has been asked whether it is quite true, as some of the ancient titles have it, that the author of these amusing tales and of the *Capitoli* which are not less so, had ever worn the Benedictine habit. Tiraboschi seriously doubts of it, for the convincing reason that if Firenzuola was a Monk, he would have known how to keep a stricter guard over his imagination. The argument is a queer one: the same as if somebody said that Rabelais must not have been Parish Priest of Meudon, since he wrote *Gargantua* and *Pantagruel*. Firenzuola lived and died a Benedictine. Indeed Canon Moreni discovered in the *Bullarium Archiepiscopale* of Florence a brief of Clement VII, dated 1526, annulling his monastic vows, under the pretext that his taking the habit and his profession were not according to the rules; but another act much later on, passed at Prato in 1539, shows us « the Reverendus Dom Angelus Florentiola, usufructuary and perpetual Administrator of the Abbey San-Salvator of Vaiano, of the order of Vallombrosa, » constituting his brother,

Girolamo Firenzuola, as procurator of the Convent. He had therefore remained always attached to the order, inspite of this annulling brief, which can not be explained. Moreover, the *Ragionamenti* are previous to it; Firenzuola, who had nothing printed during his lifetime, dedicated them in 1525 to the Marquis of Camerino, and, still more he had read the first Day's Work, the only one he achieved, to Clement VII, who expressed himself highly pleased with it. We have in respect to this the author's own testimony: « I will and may boast of this, that the judicious ear of Clement the seventh, whose praises no quill however good it be could sufficiently trace, in presence of the greatest minds of Italy, remained wide open several hours listening to the sound of my own voice, while I was reading to him the *Discacciamento* (1) and the first Day's Work of these *Ragionamenti*, which I have just dedicated to the Most Illustrious Signora Caterina Cibo, very honorable Duchess of Camerino ».

(1) The *Expulsion of letters*, etc, of which we have spoken further back.

This remembrance recalled to him the moment of his highest favor at the Pontifical Court. Let us say a few words of his biography. He was born at Florence, in 1493, of a family from Firenzuola, a small town situated at the foot of the Alps, between Florence and Bologna, whence its ascendants had taken the name. His great grand-father and grand-father filled important offices in the house of the Medicis; his father, Sebastiano Firenzuola, being successively judge and public notary, discharged the functions of Chancellor, appointed by election as overseer of the city magistrates. His mother was the daughter of Alessandro Braccesi, an estimable scholar, the author of a good translation of Appian, and he was moreover first secretary of the Republic under the grand Dukes Lawrence and Peter de Medicis; he died at Rome, as ambassador of Florence with Alexander VI; Firenzuola got a mausoleum erected to him within the basilic of the Convent of Saint-Praxedes, of which he was once an abbot. Destined by his family to the ecclesiastical state, he went to study canon-law at

Siena, then at Perugia, where he became acquainted with the famous Pietro Aretino and formed lasting relations with him. These studies shocked him ; he complains somewhere of having consumed in them with great pains and without any pleasure the most part of his youth. He attained nevertheless to a Doctor's degree and at once betook himself, about the year 1516, to Rome, where he was attached to the Curia. Under the pontificate of Clement VII, several documents being found by his biographers mark him out as entrusted with the defence of a certain number of cases, in the capacity of procurator, and invested at the same time with the titles of abbot of Saint-Praxedes and Saint-Mary the Hermit, of Spoleto. Although he had nothing printed, his manuscript works were sufficiently scattered about to win him a lawful renown ; he was besides a man of jovial humour, esteemed for the amenity of his character. « You who diffuse mirth into the souls of those who familiarly frequent you, » writes to him the Aretino, « remember how I knew you as a school boy at Perugia, as a citizen at Florence, as a pre-

late in Rome » (1). In another letter, he reminds him of his kind turns with the Pope. « I have still a recollection, » says he, « of the great pleasure which Pope Clement felt, the evening I prevailed on him to read what you had just composed on the *Omegas* of the Trissino. It was this that determined His Holiness, at the same time as Monsignor Bembo, to be eager to know you in person » (2). We have seen further back Firenzuola reading to the Pope not only his witty diatribe against the Trissino, but also the first Day's Work of the *Ragionamenti*; the Popes of that time listened to wanton tales, assisted at representations of Machiavel's *Mandragola*, or Cardinal Bib-

(1) « Voi, che spargete la giocondità del piacere negli animi di coloro che vi praticano colla domestichezza, che a Perugia scolare, a Firenze cittadino, e a Roma prelato vi ho praticato io. »

(2) «... Dello spasso che ebbe lo stesso Papa Clemente, la sera ch'io lo spinsi a legger ciò che già componeste sopra gli Omeghi del Trissino. Per la qual cosa la Santidade Sua volle, insieme con monsignor Bembo, personalmente conoscervi. »

biena's *Calandra*, and laughed as simple mortals.

The death of Clement VII, in 1534, the disgust which Firenzuola felt for his juridical functions and especially a pernicious fever, the famous fever of the Pontine Marshes, which sometimes renders a stay in Rome very dangerous, obliged him to abandon the Curia. He obtained the Abbey of Vaiano, near Cremona, but tarried especially either at Florence or Prato, and endeavoured to establish in a more wholesome air his ruined health. The fever was a long while about yielding up ; it worked upon him during seven whole years, after having worn him out to a skeleton :

« I had become of so livid a hue, that I looked like a Sienese, returned not many weeks hence from the Maremma. Ah ! wretched man ! had I fallen asleep at church among the Monks, they would have taken me in the very midst of my nap for one dead, and buried me. Och ! the money I spent to get well ! It would have been better had I lost it at cards, for in the end it was all one to me. I absorbed a whole grocery ware, and had more clysters administered me than the

Bishop of Scala, when he was in the world. I think I broke two hundred chamber pots, first in Rome, next at Florence, and wore out the greatest Physicians ».

In fine, he got rid of it thanks only to a decoction of guaiacum, the « holy wood » so famous in the sixteenth century for its curative virtues ; Firenzuola being grateful, extolled its praises in one of his best Capitoli, *In lode del legno santo*, to which the preceding quotation belongs. Yet his death came on in 1544 or 1545, having closely followed the establishment of his health ; he had at least, like that patient of whom a wag of a doctor spoke, the consolation of dying cured. He had the imprudence of returning to Rome, and he was buried near his father, within the church of his ancient Abbey of Saint-Praxedes.

This long sickness is perhaps the reason why the *Ragionamenti d'Amore*, his chief work, remained unfinished. They were published such as they were, with a few others of his works, by the care of his brother, Girolamo, under the following heading : *Prose di M. Agnolo Firenzuola, Fiorentino ; in Fiorenza, appresso*

Lorenzo Torrentino, impressor ducale, 1552, 8vo. Firenzuola intended to add five more, arranged after the same plan, to the first Day's Work, composed of preliminary conversations and six Romances. Later on they found among his papers four more Romances, matter prepared beforehand for one of the subsequent Day's Work; in this translation they come under the numbers V, VI, VII, and VIII. We give the whole ten in the order adopted by the former editors (1), who modified Firenzuola's arrangement in order to make the ten recitals fit into the frame of but one Day's Work. Such as they are, these tales give pleasure by their free allure, jovial tone, the perfect finish of their style, far more than by the idle dissertations and chattings which serve

(1) *Opere di messer Agnolo Firenzuola*, Milano, 1802, 5 vols. 8vo. They have been reedited by Bianchi, Naples, 1864, 2 vols. 18mo. In this reprint, the text of which is the best, the first Day's Work has been restored such as Firenzuola wrote it; the other four Romances are given as Appendix.

them as transitions or entries into the matter ; they cause us to deeply regret that the author has not written more of them .







NICCOLO,

while on his way to Valencia, is by some unlucky chance cast away and sold in Barbary. His master's wife falls in love with him; she turns Christian for his sake, and having fled with her in a friend's ship, they land in Sicily. They are recognized and sent back by the King's command. While they are being led back to Tunis, are cast by a storm on the coast of Leghorn and taken by Corsairs; they effect their own ransom and, having arrived at Florence, live there perfectly happy.

ROMANCE I



HERE lived in this country, now long ago, two young men of high descent, amply supplied with the gifts of Fortune, who, not content with the valiant exploits of their ancestors and not

deeming the actions of others as genuine illustrations, rendered themselves famous and commendable by their own, so that they imparted more splendor to their nobleness than they had received from it. They had, by their cultivated minds, courtesy and thousand occupations in which they were engaged, acquired so high a renown in Florence, that he who could speak most in their praise was deemed indeed happy. What was especially praiseworthy in them, was a certain tender friendship, a certain brotherly love which so united them that when one went anywhere, the other went with him, and the desire of the one was likewise that of the other.

While these young men were thus living an honorable and quiet life, Fortune had, you would say, begrudged them it. For so it turned out that one of the two friends, Niccolo degli Albizzi, had tidings of an uncle's death on his mother's side, a rich merchant of Valencia, who, without son or nearer kin, had appointed him his sole heir. It then devolved on

Niccolo, who wanted to see his own affairs in person, to make up his mind about going to Spain, and he invited Coppo (this was the other's name) to accompany him, an invitation which was most grateful to him. They had already fixed the day and way of travelling, when their misfortune or doubtless their good luck would have it that just at the time of starting, Coppo's father (Giambattista Canigiani) was stricken by so frightful a sickness that he departed this life for the next in a couple of hours. Now, if Niccolo wanted to set out, he might go alone. He bade his adieus to his friend most reluctantly, especially under such trials; but forced by sheer necessity, he set out towards Genoa, and, having taken shipping there on a Genoa vessel, had the anchor weighed at once. Fortune was most averse to his voyage. He had not yet got more than a hundred miles from land when about sunset the sea, becoming all at once foam, began to rise and threaten by a thousand signs the passengers with imminent danger. The captain, wishing to

take his precautions, accordingly prepared for it in the greatest hurry; but the rain and wind came suddenly on with so much violence that nothing of what was necessary could be done; again the night fell in an instant so pitchy dark, that they could no longer distinguish any object on earth, save when a flash of lightning occasionally broke to mark the situation still more horrible and dreadful, which plunged everything anew into the most profound darkness. What a pity to behold those poor passengers so often performing precisely what they should not, while they were also trying to meet the threats of heaven! Should the captain give any commands, nobody heard him, because of the loud noise of the rain falling in torrents, the roaring of billows dashing against one another, the straining of cordage, the flapping of sails, the flashing of lightning, the claps of thunder; the greater the necessity, the more need all had of common sense and courage. What courage could those poor creatures have, according to your opinion, on seeing the

ship now apparently attempting to jump up to the sky, then cleaving again the billows as if with the intent of flinging herself into hell? Do you fancy the hair of their heads stood upon an end, when it looked to them that the firmament, having turned into water, wanted to drop into the sea; then that the sea, in swelling, wanted to fly to the assault? What hope do you fancy they had, when they beheld the others cast into the deep what they held most precious, when they flung therein their wealth to avoid themselves a worse destiny? The vessel dislocated, abandoned to the mercy of the winds, now tossed about by them, now shattered by the waves, all filled with water, was going in search of some rock to put an end to the toils of the unhappy seamen; these not knowing henceforth what to do, threw themselves into one another's arms, embraced, sobbed, and cried for mercy with all their might. Oh! how many among them would have liked to console the others, who were themselves in need of conso-

lation and whose voice was smothered with sighs and tears! Oh! how many among them, but a little while before, defied heaven, and now seemed nuns at prayer! Who implored the Virgin Mary, who Saint Nicholas de Bari, who yelled after Saint Elm, who talked of going to the Holy Sepulchre, who of turning monk, and who of taking a wife for God's sake. Such a merchant swears to make restitution, another to cease usury; one calls upon his father, another his mother; the latter recollects his friends, the former his children; what rendered the common calamity a thousand times more horrible, was to see the misery of the one taking pity on the other, to hear all these bewailings. While the unhappy creatures were in this painful situation, the top mast was broken off by a sudden sally of the tempest, and the vessel, smashed into a thousand pieces, despatched the greater number of the passengers into the dread deep, there to fill the maws of fish and other marine beasts; the remainder, more skilful or less ill used by Fortune, provided

for their safety the one in holding on to one plank, the other to another.

Niccolo had, among the latter, grasped a plank which he only let go when it landed him on the beach of Barbary, near Sousa, a few miles from Tunis. Cast in this place and discovered by I know not how many fishermen who had come thither afishing, his state moved them to pity; they took him up, carried him off to a cabin hardby, and, having lighted a big fire, placed him close to it. After they had with great pain recalled him to his senses, made him talk, they noticed he spoke Latin, from which they rightly concluded he must be a Christian, and without further thoughts of taking a better fish for that morning, they unanimously agreed to lead him to Tunis, where they sold him as a slave, to a powerful country gentleman, called Hadji Achmet. The latter, on seeing he was young and good looking, thought of keeping him in his own service, and Niccolo showed so many proofs of cleverness and diligence in his duties, that he endeared himself in a

very short time to his master and the whole household. He became especially a favorite with Achmet's wife, one of the most courteous, genteel and comely women that ever had been or were still on those shores. He pleased her so well, that she was no longer happy day or night except when she saw him or heard him speaking; and she knew so nicely how to get round her husband, who would have imagined anything else but what really was her object, that he made her a present of him, so that she might keep him in her own service. The lady was most highly delighted at this, and retained her amorous flames secretly for a long while. Her intention at first was to feed them tacitly, without Niccolo's knowing anything about it; but from being constantly in his company, they grew so troublesome, that she was forced to satisfy them one way or another, and she had more than once the intention of disclosing her passion to him. Now, every time she was about putting her project into execution, the shame of being in love with a

slave, the dread of not being able to rely on him, the great dangers to which she saw she was exposing her honor and life, suddenly baffled her. Retiring frequently alone, fired in different senses, she used to say to herself : « Extinguish then, O » foolish one, extinguish then this flame, » while only as yet beginning to kindle ; » at present a little water will do for it, » and later on, if it gains ground over » thee, all the water in the sea will not » suffice. Ah! blind woman as thou art, » dost thou not consider the infamy thou » shalt heap on thyself, if ever anyone » comes to know that thou hast bestowed » thy love upon a stranger, a slave, a » Christian? Thou wilt no sooner have » let him see one glimpse of liberty, than » he will profit by the occasion to fly » away and abandon thee, O miserable » one, to bewail thy folly. Dost thou » not know that, while thought is » wandering, love can have nothing » stable? How couldst thou expect to be » loved by him, who dreams only of » obtaining his liberty? Withdraw then

» from this nonsensical undertaking, let
» thy foolish love vanish, and if thou
» wilt at any price stain thy honesty, let
» it be in favor of someone who will not
» be hereafter a subject of shame to thee,
» that thou mayest excuse thyself in the
» eyes of those who may have heard of
» thy imprudence. But to whom am I
» speaking, O unfortunate one? to whom
» am I addressing such supplications?
» How could I have a will of my own,
» I, who belong to another? These
» thoughts, these projects, these delibe-
» rations do not become thee, O wedded
» woman, but those who may dispose of
» themselves as they please; they do not
» become one who is in the power of a
» man as I am; I must turn my ear to
» the side where the voice of the master
» calls me. Turn then, O foolish one,
» turn thy words to better use, lose time
» no longer, waste thyself away no more.
» What thou wilt not do to-day, thou
» shalt be forced to do to-morrow, all
» in running the greatest risks; try
» that thy lover's will become one and

» the same as thy own, and know that,
» stranger as he is, he ought not to be
» held the less estimable for that, either
» by thee or anybody else. If we were
» to set a high price only on the produc-
» tions of our own country, I can not see
» why gold, pearls and other precious
» objects should be of so great a value,
» as they really are, outside the countries
» which produce them. Fortune has made
» a slave of him, but she has not on that
» account robbed him of his comely
» manners; nor does it hinder me from
» recognizing the greatness of his soul,
» from beholding the splendor of his
» merits. Fortune alters nothing in birth;
» it may betide anybody to become a
» slave; it is not his fault, it is Fortune's;
» therefore I ought to despise Fortune,
» and not him. And if it befell me to be-
» come a slave, it would not make me, in
» the bottom of my soul, other than I am.
» Let not then these motives prevent my
» wishing him well; is it because he be-
» longs to another religion, that I should
» be the more averse to him? Well, what

» of that, O foolish one! Am I more
» certain of my religion than of his?
» Supposing I had a thousand times all
» the certainty in the world about it, I
» do not deny it on that account, I do
» not the slightest thing contrary to our
» gods; yet who knows if loving and
» beloved by him, I shall not prevail
» over him to believe in our law? I shall
» thus perform an act at once agreeable
» to myself and our gods. Why struggle
» against myself? why be an enemy to
» my own pleasures? why not obey my
» inclinations? Do I fancy myself able
» to resist the laws of Love? What inno-
» cence of soul were mine, if I, who am
» but a poor silly woman, the frail target
» of his darts, should think myself able
» to keep on my guard against what
» thousands among the wisest of men
» could not escape! Let my passion
» then triumph over every other consi-
» deration, let the feeble force of a tender
» young woman no longer try to struggle
» against that of so powerful a master! »
After the enamoured woman had many

times reasoned and fought with herself, while thus producing these arguments and others of a similar kind, she finally ceded the victory to the one of the two sides towards which Love had, thanks to her own good will, urged her; and no sooner had she imagined a chance for it, than she drew Niccolo aside, told him of her torments and requested from him his love. Niccolo was quite bewildered at first on hearing the like, and all sorts of fancies whirled round in his brains. He feared she acted in this way only to put him to the test, and he had half a mind to make her an ill-boding answer; but the remembrance of certain fondlings she used to bestow on him rushed back into his head, and because he had besides discovered more discretion in her than the women of that country usually have; he bethought him of the Romance of the Count of Antwerp and of the Queen of France, besides a thousand other like instances, and he deemed the occasion propitious, whatever should become of it, to reply that he was wholly disposed to obey her behest;

which he really did. Nevertheless, whether he acted thus to give the thing a higher relish, whether he wished to make somewhat of a trial of himself, or in fine no matter why, he kept her before deciding on it a great number of days in suspense; and when she, who desired something else than empty words, clapped the saddle, as they say, on his back, he who saw right enough by a thousand signs, that he was her master, to hoodwink, I think, some intention he had should the opportunity ever present itself, resolved on making a Christian of her, before satisfying her. By means of fair and well prepared words, he told her how he was at her command, but that he entreated her beforehand to promise that she would do him a very easy thing which he would ask of her. The woman, on whom the time weighed a thousand years until the final putting of the business into operation, without thinking what he could want and out of her wits through so ardent a desire, pledged him her faith and swore a thousand oaths to do what-

ever he should request; thereupon, Niccolò very gently broke to her the nature of his resolution. The imposed condition appeared quite at first hard to the poor creature; and were it not as she incessantly repeated, that she was ever doomed to follow the will of another, I doubt not but that she would have refused to commit this folly. But Love, who is so well accustomed to perform miracles, knew, too, how to persuade her, so that after a thousand flinchings, a thousand idle projects, she was forced to say: « Do with » me as you please. » Thus, for the sake of brevity, on the same day she received baptism, on the same day they were betrothed, on the same day they consummated their marriage, and the mysteries of this new religion seemed so sweet to her, that, after the example of Alibech, she constantly upbraided herself for having so long delayed from making a trial of it; she loved so well to be within its embrace and thoroughly instructed therein, that she had no longer any happiness except when inculcating on herself some new doctrine.

While Niccolo was teaching, she learning, and while they were both at so mild a school, without anybody getting the slightest clue into the secret, Niccolo's friend, Coppo, had had knowledge of his adventure, and had with a most resolute idea of effecting his ransom come, with a large sum of money, to the coast of Barbary; he arrived on those same days at Tunis. He had hardly landed when he met Niccolo, who was haply returning from I know not where with his mistress. After they had recognized each other, not without difficulty, and embraced and kissed at least a thousand times, Niccolo, the moment he had learned the object of his voyage and offered him becoming thanks, forbade him to hint a word about his ransom until they should talk over it again, for a reason which he explained to him later on; he then pointed him out a place where they could see each other the next day, and, without further discourse, took leave of him. The wife wanted to know at once who that man was and what conversation they had

together, for she was always pricked by jealousy, fearing that not only any person whatever but even the bird flitting through space, might carry off her dear lover from her; he managed to satisfy her by means of a few stories of his own making. Niccolo had, as anyone may easily imagine, a very great desire of returning home; but knowing for certain that if his passionate young wife discovered anything about it, she would utterly ruin him or at least undermine his projects, he wavered at attempting the slightest thing whatever, and this was the reason why he did not wish Coppo to hint a word about it to anybody. For my part, I think that this love being deeply rooted within his heart from long habit, for you are well aware that in fine

Love dispenses no man beloved from loving,

would have placed before his eyes so many perils and obstacles that he would have resigned to stay where Fortune had cast him; he had nevertheless sense

enough to see that this woman was allowing herself to be too rashly carried off by her passion for him, and that Hadji Achmet would at length find out the secret. He had, for all these motives, dreamt more than once of sifting her, in order to learn whether she would be willing to come into his country, and he saw her so blinded for his sake that he held it as certain he would not have much trouble in persuading her; but as he had not as yet thought over ways or means, he had remained silent until this moment. Now that Coppo was there, and thinking his coming turned up in the nick of time and that the plan would succeed far more easily, he deemed it necessary to talk over it with his friend before treating about the ransom. Having then found Coppo and thoroughly examined the *pro* and *contra*, they finally agreed upon what was to be done, in case the woman would consent.

Niccolo chose a favorable moment and place, and greeting her in these words :
« My very kind mistress, » he says to

her, « to think of what it would have
» been necessary to do one's self, when
» another has fallen into a misfortune
» which he might quite at first have
» avoided, is nothing else than to wish,
» without knowing anything about it, to
» show one's self wise after the accident.
» It therefore appears to me necessary, if
» we do not wish to be numbered among
» such persons, to avoid the dangerous
» defiles into which our love is leading
» us, before we break our necks. Love
» has rendered us so reckless that, as you
» may judge of it still better than I, if
» we do not remedy it, I fear or am
» rather sure it will be the cause of our
» downfall. This is why I have more than
» once thought to myself of the means
» we could employ in order to escape
» from such a danger, and, out of a
» certain number which I revolved in my
» brains, I have still seen but two which
» are less hard than the rest. The first
» of them is to set our minds about gra-
» dually putting an end to our amorous
» customs; that means will, if your ardor

» is equal to mine, appear to you so hard
» that any other expedient, no matter
» how severe, will be comparatively less
» painful; so, in my mind, the second
» has always pleased me better, although
» it must seem to you quite at first very
» burdensome and of a hardly possible
» issue. Yet I doubt not but that by force
» of pondering well over it, you will
» finish by finding it smiling invitingly
» upon you to decide and choose it
» boldly; you shall behold your lover's,
» your husband's interest and honor
» springing therefrom, the opportunity
» of enjoying lastingly our love without
» anguish of soul and without peril. By this
» means I mean you are to come with
» me to our lovely Italy; what a country
» it is, compared to this, is not now the
» time to be talked over; besides, you
» often heard it spoken of before both by
» myself and others. Florence, the pleas-
» ant land of my birth, is situated in the
» centre, beneath the mildest of climates,
» and is, be it said without disparaging
» others, surely the finest city in the whole

» world. Let us not mind churches, pa-
» laces, private dwellings, streets straight
» as the barrel of a gun, fine and spacious
» squares and all that is within the walls ;
» but simply the surroundings, the gar-
» dens, the villas with which it is more
» copiously supplied than any other, will
» appear to you so many paradises, and
» should God grant us the grace of arriv-
» ing there safe, he knows how happy
» you will live there, how you will up-
» braid yourself for not having been the
» first to require it. But let us lay aside
» what may be advantageous and pleasing
» to you ; I know you set but little value
» on that, compared with what is advan-
» tageous and pleasing to me ; even
» though everything should avert you
» from this resolution, would it not suf-
» fice, in order to persuade you, to think
» of the wretched state out of which you
» would take your lover, your spouse ?
» He loves you so fervently that he pre-
» fers to live a bondsman in a foreign
» land, he who could live a freeman in
» his own, rather than abandon you ; yes,

» he could do so, for henceforth the
» means of redeeming me are not want-
» ing, provided that the love I bear you
» permits me to do as I like with myself;
» that Christian, to whom I was speaking
» the other day, has almost come to an
» understanding now with your husband.
» But please God I shall not leave with-
» out my lady, my mistress, my soul;
» I know her love for me is so strong,
» her confidence in my words so un-
» bounded, that it seems to me I behold
» her already fix her thoughts on this
» means which to my mind is the most
» propitious. Indeed, what means that
» hesitation? Who is holding you, Madam,
» that I hear you not pronounce, as soon
» as I should have wished, some loving
» word? Perhaps it seems to you prepos-
» terous to leave your fatherland? Know
» you not that for a woman full of cou-
» rage as you are, every home is a father-
» land? If I am your happiness, as you
» yourself have a thousand times repeated,
» where I shall be, will you not have
» your country, your spouse, your pa-

» rents? The more you leave of them
» here, so much the more of them shall
» you find over there, rather in a hundred-
» fold, and you will be so delighted in
» frequenting our ladies, especially one of
» my little sisters, that you will fancy
» you have left the wild forests to come
» and live among men. This sister of
» mine, besides her natural affability, will,
» when she knows the many and varied
» kindnesses you have had for me,
» caress and see you with so much joy,
» that you will bless a thousand times
» the day on which I shall have brought
» you into that charming country. This
» is not the moment to discuss with you
» of other men and their merits; besides
» you solved the question yourself long
» ago. Yet, if I have pleased and still please
» you to such a degree that you should
» bestow on me your own sweet self,
» I, who beside them look more like a
» country fellow than I am here consi-
» dered by you as a brave champion, so
» the others ought to be so much the
» more pleasing to you, since they are

» better judges in this matter. That
» which keeps you, now that all other
» reasons counsel you to fly, would it be
» the dread of what they would say about
» you in this country after your depart-
» ure? Ah! Madam, let not that either
» hinder you from doing what is to be
» so advantageous to you and me both
» together. Not that honor ought not to
» be placed above all, and I confess the
» opinion is good of those who pretend
» that we must not mind the evil people
» say of us, so long as their words do
» not reach our ears; but neither you
» nor anybody else ought to be troubled
» about a reproach wrongfully aimed, as
» would be your case should anyone re-
» prove you in this. Who can backbite
» you with righteous teeth, because you
» abandoned the false religion to embrace
» the true one, because you have fled
» far from those who are deadly enemies
» of us Christians? Who will blame you
» for having entered the land of your
» spouse, for having dragged him out of
» slavery? nobody of sound judgment.

» On the contrary, there will be a host
» of persons to congratulate you, to extol
» you to the clouds. Of what are you
» thinking then, my darling soul? That
» which is keeping you back, would it be for
» sooth the hardship and peril which you
» know inseparable from such an enter-
» prise? If that is so, I will answer you
» for it, although I see no danger in it, if
» there is one, it is doubtful; whereas to
» remain here, to conduct ourselves as
» our mutual love forces us to it, the
» peril is evident. Now, who is there
» who would not expose himself to an
» uncertain peril, in order to avoid an-
» other which he knows to be most
» certain? As for the difficulties, I shall
» take charge of them myself, and I so
» swear to you upon my faith, if God
» does not deprive me of your favor,
» which causes me to live happy even in
» bondage; I have found, through that
» friend with whom you so often see me
» conversing, the means of our flying
» away in all safety, on one of his vessels.
» Consider, my darling mistress, what

» confidence I have placed in you that
» I should disclose to you such grave
» projects; reflect on all the kinds of
» goods that will result from a like deci-
» sion, and see that neither the abandon-
» ing your native land and relations, nor
» dangers or difficulties ought to retain
» you. Get ready then to free me from
» bondage, get ready to bring me to my
» beloved city, or rather yours, to your
» relations', near my sister, who is now
» waiting me a long weary while and,
» with eyes full of tears, crossed arms, is
» imploring you to restore me to them,
» as well as yourself. » Accompanying
these last words with loving sighs which
would have removed rocks and with as
many tears as he thought fit for a man to
shed, he was silent.

Niccolo's words so deeply touched the heart of the tender young woman that, although it appeared to her cruel and preposterous to take such a resolution, although she felt a thousand difficulties, a thousand perils pass through her head, she was thinking at the same time of all

those perfidies which, they say, you men (1) practice towards women silly enough to love you; urged on by her great love, which smoothened down for her all the mountains, she like a courageous woman, as she was, answered him without iurther preliminaries, that she was ready to do his will. To cut short the recital, after he had arranged with Coppo the when and the how and had procured the needful supplies, the woman, having previously made provision of a fair share of gold and silver and other valuable objects, feigned one fine morning to go out for a walk and repaired with Niccolo to the coast where Coppo's ship was moored. The moment they arrived, she and all those who were to cross over pretended they wanted to visit the ship and, leaving the others on shore, embarked and speedily gave the sails to the wind : those that had come in their company no sooner discovered it, than the ship was more than a mile from shore; they at length reco-

(1) A woman relates these Romances.

gnizing the trick that was played on them, returned quite astonished and displeased, and informed Hadji Achmet of how the thing had happened. You must imagine what a noise was made and how everything was done to overtake them, but the wind was so favorable that they had almost gained Sicily before anyone thought of pursuing them.

Wafted towards Sicily, they landed at Messina, because the lady, being but sorrowfully accustomed to so many fatigues, was in need of a little rest; they therefore made up their minds to go into the heart of the town and put up at the best hotel they would find, which they did. The Court was by chance transferred to Messina during those days, and an ambassador of the king of Tunis, having come with the king of Sicily, to treat some very weighty affairs, was just staying at the same hotel as our heroes, to crown the misfortune. He perceived I know not how often the young woman by stealth, so to say, fancied he knew her and, while remaining thus in suspense, being not sure

whether it was she or not, there arrived from his Prince some letters informing him about her flight and ordering him, if she happily landed in that country, to use all his endeavors with the king and those of whom there might be need, to have her brought back to her husband. The ambassador, the moment he had knowledge of the letters, held it for certain that this was she, went without further inquiries, to the king and unfolded to him his Prince's orders. The king without any delay summoned the woman and two young men before him; he had no trouble in perceiving that it was she whom they were looking for and, desirous of doing something pleasing to the king of Tunis, commanded that they should be at once led back, and did not wait to hear any other reasons. What grief was that of the poor young woman, of her unhappy Niccolo and of Coppo likewise, when they heard so sorrowful a news! What cries, what tears and what prayers! I should never have the heart to relate the thousand part of them. Brought back by force to

the harbour and re-embarked on the same ship, the command of which the king confided to a man on whom he relied, they were conveyed back to Barbary, as prisoners of the king of Tunis. Thanks to a more favorable weather than they would desire, they had already got within a few miles off the creek of Carthagenæ, when Fortune, henceforth weary of so many annoyances and toils conjured up against poor Niccolo, resolved to give the wheel a turn : she caused so terrible a wind and tempest to rage, that the ship was driven violently back and within a few hours, the thing is scarcely credible, she was carried into our Tyrrhenian sea, off Leghorn. Despoiled of her mast, rigging, quite disabled, she fell into the hands of Pisan Corsairs, who allowed the young lady and two young men to redeem themselves for a large sum of money, and the three betook themselves to Pisa. They stayed there some time, to establish the young woman's health, harassed by so many fatigues and chagrins; then, when she looked sufficiently recovered, they set out

for Florence. The kind reception, the festivities, the caresses with which they were loaded since their return, I could not imagine, much less describe. After the young woman had lived a few days in joy, when she had become strong and gay as Niccolo desired, he had her newly baptised and christened Beatrix, at Saint Giovanni's; it was a general holiday in town. He then resolved to wed her solemnly according to the Christian rite, and that the feast might be complete, the rejoicings general, and that the friendship which united him with Coppo might be bound by still closer ties, he gave him his sister in wedlock, who, besides being very handsome, degenerated in no way from her brother's virtue. The weddings being over (and they were luxurious, splendid), Mrs. Beatrix, more and more satisfied with the country and conversation of the men and women, owned that Niccolo had not told her lies; she had so much friendship for her sister-in-law and the latter for her, that it would not have been easy to know which friendship was

the most intimate, that of the two young women or that of the two young men. The whole four lived so joyfully without there ever arising an angry word between them, in such tranquillity and union, that all Florence had no other topic for conversation. They became every day more happy, more contented and more desirous of pleasing one another, nor did the too great familiarity, the long habit of being together beget weariness or loathsomeness in their hearts; far from that, their tenderness increased daily the one for the other, and they lived a long time in perfect happiness.





FULVIO

falls in love at Tivoli, and penetrates in woman's garbs into the house of his belle; she discovers his sex and is delighted with such an adventure. While they live in good accord, the husband perceives that Fulvio is a man, but believes on the sincerity of his and a friend's protestations, that he has become so since his stay in the place; he still keeps him in his service, in order to impart the male sex to the children.

ROMANCE II



HERE was at Tivoli, an ancient city of the Latins, a gentleman called Cecc' Antonio Fornari, who had the idea of taking a wife at an age when other men have a thousand griefs from theirs, and, as it is the case with old men,

he would not take one unless she was young and good-looking; he lit on the right thing. One of the Coronati, named Giusto, a man of some note into the bargain, seeing himself overstocked with a lot of daughters and in order not to be obliged to hand out a large dowry, gave him one of them, a pretty and comely lass. She, on seeing herself tied up to an old fellow fallen back into childhood, and henceforth deprived of those pleasures on account of which she wished for so long a time to abandon her home, her father's love and mother's caresses, became very angry about it; she grew at length so disgusted at the spitting, wheezing and the other trophies of her husband's old age, that she thought of making herself amends and got it into her head to take, should the occasion however present itself, somebody who could supply the wants of her youth better than her father himself had known how to do: Fortune was far more propitious to her schemes than she would have dared to hope for. In fact, a young Roman, called

Fulvio Macaro, having repaired to Tivoli with one of his friends, named Menico Coscia, by way of amusement, and having frequently a glimpse of the young woman who appeared to him pretty, as indeed she was so, fell ardently in love with her and, entrusting this Menico with the secret of his love, commended himself to him for the best. Menico, who was a man to get his hands safely out of any scrape, told him, without tiring him by a flood of words, to be of good hope and that if he was resolved on following out his idea in everything, he well knew how to settle matters in a way that he should be as often as he liked with the young woman. You imagine whether Fulvio, who had no other desire, told him thereupon to call again to morrow; he forthwith cried out that he was prepared for every event, provided his friend helped his suffering. — « I have been told », Menico then continued, « that the lady's husband is » on the look out for a slip of a girl of » fourteen or fifteen years old for the » house-service, and get her married at

» the end of a few years, as this custom
» still flourishes in Rome. I have deter-
» mined that it shall be you who will go
» to him, to remain there as long as you
» please, but listen a while how. Our
» neighbour, that man from Tagliacozzo,
» who comes sometimes to our place to
» do one thing or another, is, as you are
» aware, a great friend of mine. While
» talking yesterday morning, he told me
» I know not about what subject that the
» old fellow had charged him to procure
» him one, and to do this he was about
» returning home in a few days to see if
» there is not somebody to bring him.
» He is poor and willingly offers his ser-
» vices to the wealthy; I doubt not but
» that by the aid of a little drink-money
» which could be given him, he would
» be ready to do whatever we wish. He
» can then pretend that he is gone to
» Tagliacozzo and is to return thence in
» a fortnight or twenty days; he will
» dress you up like one of those village
» girls and passing you off for one of
» his relations, will place you in your

» lady's mansion. When there, if the
» courage fails you to put the rest into
» execution, you will have only yourself
» to blame. What will aid you in all this
» is the whiteness of your skin, without
» having to wear a beard for the next
» ten years, and as you have a wo-
» man's face, so much so that for most
» part of the time they take you, as you
» know, for a woman dressed up in man's
» clothes. Besides, as your nurse belonged
» to there, I think you can speak pretty
» much like those country people ». The
poor lover agreed to all this, and it seem-
ed to him a thousand years until the
scheme should be put into execution ; it
already appeared to him that he was
with her helping her to do the house-
wifery, and such is the power of the imagi-
nation that he contented himself with
what he was to be, absolutely the same
as if it were really so.

They were off, without wasting a
single moment, to look for the country-
man, who was very glad of the commis-
sion, and they settled beforehand every-

thing that was to be done. Not to spin out the recital too long, Fulvio was, before a month had passed, already in his lady's mansion, in the quality of housemaid, and he waited on her so diligently that in a short time not only Lavinia (such was this youngster's name), but the whole house had the warmest friendship for him. While Lucia (thus the new servant had herself called), remaining in this position, was waiting for an opportunity of being serviceable to her otherwise than in making the bed, it happened that Cecc' Antonio went to pass a few days in Rome, and Lavinia, seeing herself left alone, had the whim of taking Lucia to sleep with her. On the first night, after they had got under the blankets, and that, to one of them all mirthful at the unexpected windfall, it seemed a thousand years until the other fell asleep, to gather while she slept the fruit of her turmoils, the other thinking perhaps of some dashing young blade, who was shaking the dust of her fur better than her husband, began to embrace and kiss

her most affectionately, and, as that may turn out, her hand just strayed towards the side of the place where one distinguishes a boy from a girl; finding she was not there a woman like herself, she greatly wondered and withdrew her hand to herself, not less astounded than she would have been if she had felt all of a sudden a serpent under a bunch of grass. Lucia waited, without daring to say or do anything, the issue of the scheme, and Lavinia, doubting that this was the servant, set to stare, as one aghast; yet, seeing that it was indeed Lucia, but not venturing to speak to her, she had the thought of putting her hand again on the object of her astonishment, found it as at first and remained at bay not knowing whether she was asleep or awake. Then thinking that perhaps her touch might be deceiving her, she raised up the blanket, wishing to assure herself of the whole fact with her own eyes: she not only beheld with her eyes what she had touched with her hands, but discovered a heap of snow, having the form of a man and

the tint of fresh roses, so that she was compelled to give herself up to a like wonder and to believe that so great a change was miraculously wrought, that she might safely taste the sweetness of love during the years of her youth. Being quite encouraged, she turned towards Lucia and said : « Oh ! what do I see » there this night, with my eyes ? I know » right well that you were just now a » girl, and lo you are at present become » a boy ! How is that ? I fear I see » double or that you are some be- » witched evil spirit come beside me to » night in stead of Lucia, to make me » fall into wicked temptations. Indeed » and indeed I must see what that affair » is. » While speaking thus, she slipped under Lucia and began to excite her with those provocations which frolicsome young girls willingly make use of on young brats formed before their age. She assured herself at this game that it was not a bewitched spirit, that she had not the double view at all, and she had the comfort thereof that you yourself may imagine. But

do not think that she considered herself as out of doubt the first time, or even the third; I can assure you that if she had not feared for the changing of the real Lucia into a ghost, she would have believed herself quite certain of the fact only at the sixth. When she had arrived at it, in passing from the action to a conversation, she besought her by touching words to say how it had taken place; so Lucia, recalling the events since the first day of her love for her down to the present moment, related the whole story to her. She was exceedingly glad to see herself loved by so pretty a youth and how he had exposed himself to so many turmoils and perils for her. Passing from this account to other moving discourses, and perhaps still wishing to come to a certainty for the seventh time, they tarried so long about getting up that the sun was already peeping in through the window slits; the moment for doing so seemed to them arrived, and after having decided that Lucia should remain a girl during the day time before everybody,

and become a boy at night or whenever they would find the means of being alone, they left the room all joyful.

This happy accord lasted a long while; months passed without anyone in the house becoming aware of anything, and it would have continued so for years, had not Cecc' Antonio, although he was as I have said altogether beyond the age and his donkey could hardly convey the corn to the mill once a month, on seeing Lucia skipping through the house and considering her pretty good-looking, be-thought himself of wishing to discharge a sievefull into her press and teased her several times by his importunities. Lucia, fearing lest some scandal might result from it one fine day, besought Lavinia for God's sake to rid her of such an annoyance. I have no need to tell you whether the gnat pricked her and whether she hummed a blindman's litany the first time she had an interview with her husband; all I can certify is that she styled him something less than lord. « Look at, » she cried out, « look at that bold foot soldier

» who wants to go through his drills like
» a cavalier! Well! what the deuce would
» you do then, if you were young and
» jolly? You who have now to occupy
» yourself no longer except with the
» graveyard and expect every moment the
» final decree, you want to give me a
» pretty gash in the face? Leave then,
» you old fool, leave then sin as it has
» left you. Do you not know that even
» were you steel, you would not be ca-
» pable of forming the top of a needle
» of Damas? Oh! it would do you great
» honor when you would have reduced
» this poor girl, who is as good as bread,
» to what I will not name. That will be
» her dowry, that will serve her for a
» husband! oh! the great joy her father
» and mother will be in over it! How all
» her relations will be merry, when they
» discover that they have confided their
» ewe to the care of wolves! Tell me
» briefly, nasty man, if the like was done
» on yourself, what would you think about
» it? What! have you not set all Para-
» dise in a hubbub these latter days be-

» cause they gave me a serenade? But do
» you know what I have to tell you? If
» you do not conduct yourself otherwise,
» you will make me think of certain
» things of which I never dreamt up to
» the present; oh! yes, oh! yes; you
» shall have enough to make you merry
» some fine day. Wait a bit, you shall
» see; I shall put in your way what you
» are looking for, and since I understand
» that by conducting myself well it suc-
» ceeds but ill with me, I shall now try
» if conducting myself badly does not
» succeed better. In fine, whoever will
» have fair weather in this low deceitful
» world, has only to do evil. » As she
accompanied these last words with four
wicked little tears forcibly shed, she affected the jolly old fellow so well, that he begged her pardon and promised her never to rebuke her again in the world. But his promises were of little value, and if the tears were feigned, as well as the end of the imprecations, so was the relenting which they had provoked.

In a few days hence, Lavinia having

repaired to a wedding party which the people of Tobaldo were celebrating, and having left behind at the house Lucia who felt somewhat indisposed, the enterprising good fellow found her asleep I know not in what part of the mansion. She could perceive nothing : he took occasion thereby to slip his hands underneath her petticoat and, lifting it up to indulge in his little pleasure, he lighted upon what he was little expecting. Bewildered with wonder, he stood for some time like a lifeless thing ; then revolving a thousand bad thoughts in his head, began to ask himself in a most brisk tone what that meant. Lucia, although her threats and incoherent words had given him at first a great mind to be afraid, had nevertheless her excuse quite ready, for she had since a long time conferred thereupon with Lavinia, in the case such a thing should crop up, and knowing that he was a jolly old fellow to believe a fib just as well as a truth ; that he was not so terrible in reality as he appeared in words ; she did not in the least trouble

herself, pretended to be shedding hot tears and implored him to hear her reasons. After he had by the aid of a few more kind words encouraged her, she began, with a quivering voice and her eyes rivetted on the ground, to say :

« Know, my dear lord, that when I came
» into this house (cursed be the hour I
» put my foot here, since so silly an ad-
» venture was to befall me in it !) I was
» not what I am now. Three months ago
» (my God, sad life is mine !) that thing
» there came to me ; one day as I was
» washing with lie, I felt a heavy weariness
» creep over me, and it began to
» grow, so small, so small, then it gradually
» commenced increasing in size
» so thoroughly that it has arrived at the
» degree you see, and if I had not seen
» those days one of your nephews, the
» tallest of them, having one like it, I
» should have thought it was some evil
» swelling ; for it sometimes gives me
» so much trouble that I should prefer to
» have I know not what. I am so ashamed
» of it, yes, indeed, I am so ashamed

» of it, that I have never dared open my
» mouth about it to anybody. Thus, since
» there is on my part neither fault nor
» sin, I beseech you for God's sake and
» our Good Lady of Olive, to have pity
» on me ; I promise you that I should
» rather die than people should learn so
» shameful a thing about a poor girl as
» I am. »

The dear old man, who was completely out of his latitude, seeing the tears raining from her four by four and hearing her uttering her reasons so nicely, began almost to believe that she was speaking truly. Nevertheless, as that seemed to him too much of a good thing and the caresses which Lavinia was accustomed to lavish on her rushed back into his head, he suspected some under-hand-work and asked himself if Lavinia had not, after finding the thing out, taken advantage of the windfall under his nose ; he then interrogated Lucia more explicitly and asked her whether her mistress had had any knowledge about it. — « The Lorg
» preserve me ! » she replied boldly, seeind

that henceforth the matter was in a fair way of doing ; « I have been always on » my guard against it as of an unlucky » adventure ; I told you and repeat it to » you, I would rather die than anyone » in the world should know it. If God » cures me of that evil, no man living, » except yourself, shall know it ; and » may God grant, since He brought this » infirmity on me, that I may become » again such as formerly ! To tell you » the truth, I am so grieved about it that » I am sure to die soon ; for besides the » shame it will cause me every time I » see you, while thinking that you know » my story, it seems to me I am the » most encumbered creature in the world » on feeling, need I mention it, that machine swinging between my legs. — » Come, my child, » replies old grey beard quite affected, « remain so, without » mentioning a word about it to anyone ; » perhaps we may find some medicine » to cure you ; leave it to me, but especially do not hint a word about it to » Madam. »

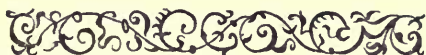
Thus, without pronouncing another syllable, his head quite confused, he left her and went off to the Doctor of the locality, whom they called Master Consolo, and I know not to how many other persons, to inquire about the accident. In the meanwhile, the wedding was over, Lavinia returned home, and when she had learned from Lucia what had happened, I leave you to think whether she was displeased at it; I reckon it was a still sadder news for her than when she knew she had so old a husband. Cecc' Antonio, who had gone, as I have just stated, to inquire about the malady, having heard so much about it now in one way, now in another, returned home more perplexed than ever. Without saying a word to anybody that night, he resolved to set out for Rome the next morning, in search of some learned man who knew better how to expound the enigma to him; as soon as the day dawned, he saddled his horse and proceeded on his way to Rome. Having alighted at one of his friend's house, and after taking

a slight luncheon, he repaired to the University, thinking to find there better than elsewhere somebody who knew how to remove this flea out of his ear ; and by happy chance fell precisely on that kind comrade who had got Lucia placed at his house ; the young man came sometimes into these quarters for pastime. The old man, on seeing him well dressed and saluted by a crowd of people, thought that he must be some great scholar, led him aside, and, under an oath of secrecy, entrusted him with his torment. Menico, who thoroughly knew the fine old fellow and who doubted at once about the affair, said to himself while laughing aside : « You have put up at the right inn, » and after a long conversation, he gave him to understand once for all that the thing was not only possible, but that it had already happened several times. In order the more easily to gain his belief, he led him into a bookseller's shop, named Jacopo di Giunta, and calling for a Pliny in Italian, showed him what this author says about a similar case, Book VII,

chapter IV; he then showed him what Battista Fulgoso writes of it in his chapter *On Miracles*, and in this way he tranquilized the anxious old man's conscience so well, that all the people in the world might come to him: nobody could have made him believe that it could be otherwise. Once Menico was convinced that the thing had thoroughly entered his brains, and that it was not likely to leave it, he began another anthem and set to persuade him to not send away Lucia from his house; it was, said he, a good omen for a place, when such accidents came unexpectedly: there was never anything but boys, and a thousand other ridiculous stories. He then begged him so strictly, if ever he had any doubt to clear up, to apply always to him, that he would undertake it most willingly; and he knew so well how to give him reasons, that the good old man would not have parted with them for money. After having thanked this learned man and offered him all his fortune, Cecc' Antonio took his leave of him; the day

seemed to him to last a thousand years until he got back to Tivoli to see if he could make a boy with his wife. As soon as he arrived, he tried at it with all his might that very evening, in order not to make a liar of the omen, and Lavinia helped him valiantly. She grew bulky and was brought to bed of a boy, which caused that Lucia remained at the house as long as she had pleasure, without the old fellow perceiving or wishing to perceive anything.





CARLO

loves Laldomine ; she, in order to comply with her mistress, pretends to love an Abbot, and, thinking she is making him enter the house, makes Carlo enter it. Carlo fancies himself sleeping with the servant and is sleeping with the mistress ; the latter thinks she is sleeping with the Abbot and is sleeping with Carlo.

ROMANCE III



HERE lived in the time of our fathers, at Florence, a very rich merchant, named Girolamo Cambini, who had a wife that was held in her youth to be incontestably the prettiest in the whole town. What was above all the rest praiseworthy in her was her virtue, so much so that she made a show of placing nothing

at a higher price, and she never seemed to see either at church, on the promenade, on the door-steps or at her window, that there existed men, very far from looking at any of them. It happened that many fellows, after having been smitten by her, because of her extraordinary beauty, perceiving at length her coldness and not having been able to obtain from her a single glance, desponded in a short time of the enterprise; and it was, I think, their complaints, often heaved to the heavens, that decided Love to take charge of their vengeance.

There was at this time a young man at Florence of noble family, named Mister Pietro of the Bardi; but as he was a priest and possessed among other benefices a fine abbey, they called him the Abbot; he was in the opinion of everybody considered the handsomest fellow in Florence, and I think I remember having seen him, when I was a slip of a girl (1): old as he

(1) This recital is placed in the mouth of Bianca.

was then, he still seemed very good looking. The charming young woman could not, thanks to that lovely form, hinder herself from making a truce with her hard-heartedness and fell madly in love with him; nevertheless, in order not to wander away from her habits, she enjoyed him and his good looks in the bottom of her soul, without letting anything come to the surface, or she used to talk of him mysteriously with one of her little chambermaids, bred up and fed in her father's house, whom she had kept in her service; and in this way she smothered as best she could her amorous flames. Many and many days had sped by for her in like sufferings, when at last the idea struck her to make shift with her amorous caprice in such a way, that neither the Abbot nor anybody else might suspect anything; this is how. She enjoined on Laldomine (this was the servant's name), every time she should happen to meet the aforesaid Abbot, to attract his attention by oglings and slight tokens of friendship, guessing that he would be easily smitten thereby, the

more so because she was very pretty, having something alluring in her, and besides her peculiar garments, which were not quite those of a person of condition, nor yet those of a servant, imparted to her an extraordinary grace. One morning among the rest as the two women were at Santa-Croce on the occasion of I know not what feast, the Abbot was there also, and the cunning little female put her mistress's recommendations into practice, though very uselessly, for this reason that the Abbot saw or feigned to see nothing, likely because he was still too young and little up to such games. There chanced to be in the Abbot's company another young man, a Florentine also, named Carlo Sassetti, who, having long coveted this Laldomine, remarked her oglings, and set at once about devising some clever trick; he was only awaiting an opportunity and immediately put his project into execution.

It so happened about this time that the husband of Agnoletta (such was the lady's name), mounted horse and set out to

Florence for a few days. Carlo, who had an eye out for that, used to do nothing but pass every evening at two or three o'clock along the street in which the two women were living, and once among other times perceived Laldomine through a pretty low window on the ground floor, near the stair-case looking over a little street which was next the house. Owing to the heat which was already very great, the servant was going with a candle in her hand to fetch her mistress water. Carlo had no sooner a glimpse of her, than he drew near the window and began in a low voice to call Laldomine; she was quite astonished, but instead of closing the window and going away about her business, as anyone would have done who would not have cared to listen to idle stories and answer them, she hid the light, came to the window and said: — « Who is there? » Carlo quickly replied to her that it was the sweetheart whom she knew very well, and that he wanted to say four words to her. — « What friend » or what enemy? » replied she. « You had

» better go to your work and you
» ought to be ashamed. By God's cross !
» if our men were here, you would not
» act like that ; one sees there is nothing
» here but women. Leave here, bad luck
» to you, you impudent fellow ; oh !
» yes, I am going to break my jug on
» your pate. » Carlo, who had been more
than once in such scrapes and knew that
our true manner of saying no, is for us
not to lend our ears to the least word of
sharper, Carlo was not a bit frightened ;
he besought her again to open the door,
in using the sweetest words in the world,
and finally told her he was the Abbot.
The wench had no sooner heard the Ab-
bot named, than she softened down com-
pletely, and in a much less brisk tone
began to reply : « Which Abbot or non-
» Abbot ? What have I to do with the
» Abbot and his monks ? Begone, begone !
» If you were the Abbot, you would not
» be out at a like hour ; I know very
» well that good priests like he is do not
» ramble by night to go awhoring after
» other peoples' wives, and especially to

» the homes of honest women. — My
» Laldomine, » replied Carlo, « the great
» love I bear you forces me to do what I
» ought to be on my guard against; but if
» I come to importunate you at a like
» hour, let it not surprise you: I have
» so earnest a mind to open you my soul,
» that there is nothing I would not do to
» be able to say to you two words. Have
» then the goodness, my hope, to let
» me in, were it for ever so short a
» while; do not refuse me a thing of so
» slight importance. » Laldomine felt
herself touched by such entreaties and
thinking it certainly was the Abbot, she
was one moment for opening the door
on the instant; but she believed it would
be well to make herself sure that it really
was he, by some understood sign, and
resolved to wait until the next night. She
therefore answered him half in a jest:
« Be off, be off, sharper; do you think
» that I do not know that you are not the
» Abbot? If I was quite sure that you are
» he, I should let you in, not to do harm,
» do not go and believe so at least, but to

» know what you want with me and to
» tell Girolamo the fine affronts you
» make him when he is not here. And if
» you were not the Abbot? Oh! unhappy
» woman as I should be! I should con-
» sider myself the most wretched woman
» from Borgo-Allegri. But come back this
» way to-morrow about the twenty-first
» hour (1), I shall wait for you on the
» door-steps, and as a sign that it will be
» you, when you are right in front of the
» door, blow your nose in this handker-
» chief; » (she handed him while thus
speaking a handkerchief bordered with
black silk;) « yes, do that, and I promise
» you if you pass this way to-morrow at
» this hour, I shall let you in; you may
» then say to me whatever you like, ho-
» nestly of course, do not go and think
» the contrary. » Having said this, she
shut the window in his face, without
even shaking hands, and running off to
her mistress, related the story such as it

(1) Three o'clock in the afternoon.

was. The lady raised her hands to heaven and, considering the moment had certainly come when her stratagem was going to succeed, thanked her in embracing and kissing her a thousand times.

In the meantime Carlo having got home, went to bed, but could not close an eye the whole night, thinking of what should be done that the Abbot might effect the exacted counter-proof. He got up wholly absorbed by this affair, and, repaired about mass time to Nunziata, where chancing to meet a friend of his, called Girolamo Firenzuola, who was stuck with the Abbot the whole day, he related to him his adventure of last night, and craved his help and advice about the story of the counter-proof. Firenzuola told him on the instant to be of good hope, and that if there was nothing more to be done, he might be quiet; for at the desired moment he took charge himself of doing all that would be needed. After these few words, he got the handkerchief and took leave of his friend. When the time appeared to him suitable, he was off

to the Abbot, took him out for a walk and, passing from one topic to another while strolling along, he led him by the side of Agnoletta's house, without the other suspecting anything; when they were right before the door, Firenzuola said to the Abbot, previously putting the handkerchief into his hand : — « Sir » Abbot, wipe your nose then ; it is all » dirty. » The Abbot who thought no more about it, took the handkerchief and blew into it : Laldomine and Agnoletta firmly believed that he had only blown his nose to make the understood sign and were exceedingly glad of it. The two young men said no more to each other and directed their steps towards the square San-Giovanni; there Firenzuola asked the Abbot's permission to leave and went off to Carlo, who was waiting for him near the hospital wall of the Orphelines; he told him how the the thing took place and without further talk, leaving him alone in his joy, bade him good-bye.

The night having come, Carlo proceed-

ed on his way about three o'clock (1) to the house of the two women, and, having planted himself beside the same window as the other evening, waited for Laldomine. He was not very long there when the servant, prompted by her who was still more desirous of it than Carlo, came to the window, saw him, recognized him as the man of the eve and nodded at him to go to the door. Carlo did so, and, finding it open, entered into the house very quietly; he wanted, as soon as he was inside, to catch Laldomine in his arms and kiss her, but she being faithful to her mistress would listen to nothing and bade him stay there very tranquilly, without making the least noise, until Madam was gone to bed. Then feigning that somebody was calling her, she left the hall and went off to Agnoletta, who was most eagerly awaiting the issue of all this. When she found out that the Abbot was in her house, if she was not delight-

(1) Nine o'clock at night.

ed at it, the continuation of my Novel will let you see, without there being any need for me to tell you. She had a bed covered with the finest clothes, prepared beforehand in a room next the hall; she then told Laldomine to go for the Abbot and make him sleep there. She returns groping her way in the dark to Carlo, and silently led him into the room, without his suspecting anything, bade him take off his clothes and get into bed. Having done this, she went out, feigning she was going to see if her mistress was asleep, and before much time had passed Madonna Agnoletta, well bathed, well perfumed, went softly to him, instead and in place of Laldomine, and got into bed beside him : although the darkness contrived to conceal her beauty, she was such that aided by a dazzling whiteness she could hardly disguise herself. In the belief the two lovers were in of being the one with Laldomine, the other with the Abbot, without much talking for fear of disclosing themselves to each other, it was by smacks, tight embracings and all the

endearments natural to so fortunate a couple that they understood each other, making each other the tenderest caresses as you may imagine ; if any fond exclamation chanced to drop from their lips, it was murmured so low that the other could not hear it, and, wondering at such discretion they were only the gladder for it. But what gives me most mind to laugh, when I think of it, is the mutual satisfaction they both felt for having arrived at their end by so amusing a drollery ; while she was laughing to herself for having so nicely taken him in, he was laughing at her for having taken herself in, and they were both so contented with this fine fun, that it enhanced their pleasure two-fold. They passed, without in the least suspecting who one or the other was, the whole night in such amusement, such rejoicing, such transports that they would wish it to last a whole year.

When the morning dawned, Madonna Agnoletta got up and, pretending she was going I know not where, sent Laldomine in her place ; she made Carlo dress him-

self in the greatest hurry, and made him go out secretly by a small door which opened out behind the house. But that this night which had been the first might not be the last, they agreed that every time Girolamo would allow them the possibility for it, they should know how to take advantage of the occasion; so that they often met, without anybody's discovering it, and spent similar nights.

Judge, lovely youths, whether this lady's craft was great; she knew, under another's name and without risking her honor, how to make herself fine weather otherwise than in words.





DOM GIOVANNI

loves la Tonia; she yields to him on the promise of a pair of sleeves; but as he is not giving them, she, on accord with her husband, gets him to come to her house, and there they compel him to inflict penance on himself.

ROMANCE IV



YOU must know there lived, now a long while ago, among the Pistojan mountains, a priest, called Dom Giovanni, curate to the church of Santa-Maria, at Quarantola; and in order to keep up the usual custom of country-priests, he fell madly in love with one of his parishoniers. She was called la Tonia and was the wife of one of the great guns of the village, named Giovanni, but better

known by the nickname Ciarpaglia. This Tonia was perhaps twenty-two ; she was well set and quite plump, and rather dark owing to the excessive love the sun bore her : you would say half a marble column which had lain buried during long years under ground. Among other capacities, such as being skilled in nailing down a base coin, drawing out neat furrows when she dug, she was the best dancer in the whole place ; and if anybody unfortunately chanced to go through the sets with her, after the rigadoon, she was so long-winded that she would have put a hundred men out of breath. Happy indeed was he who could dance a single heat with her, and I can assure you she had been the cause of more than one dispute. Now, when this jolly female discovered the gentleman's passion, and being not in the least frightened by it, she occasionally set to making him petty cajoleries, so that the priest jumped with joy at them and you would have said a three year-old colt. He was gnawing into her more and more every day, and, without

ever speaking of anything that went lower down than the waist, he used to come and talk with her a couple of hours, telling her the finest laughable stories you ever heard. She, who was more cunning than the Devil, in order to see if he was very accommodating with folks and if he held out stoutly against the temptation of the purse, always asked him for some little trifle whenever she knew he was to go to town, such as two farthings' worth of Levant red, a little ceruse, a buckle for her waistband, or similar toys. The priest used to spend his money as willingly on her as if it was to have a chasuble mended. With all this, he was waiting, whether he contented himself with doing the beau for a shew, by wearing a sky-blue cloth gown with the sleeves cut off at the elbows (1), and that he found in the pure love a sufficient satisfaction, or was afraid of the husband,

(1) This is the traditional costume of the Angels.

or no matter why, he was waiting until she would say to him : « Ser Giovanni, » do come to bed with me. » This lasted fully two months, which he spent feeding on the wind, like Ciolle's donkey (1), while she made some little profit by him ; things went no further. At length, he thought it would be well, whether la Tonia took it too easy like a woman who was not ashamed to ask him one after another for a pair of yellow buskins, those in fashion, split at the sides and laced with a string, then a pair of perforated galoches with lovely white bridles set off by all sorts of Arabesques, or whether the rage of the cod-piece which daily increased, or for no matter what other motive, he thought it would be well on the first occasion that would present itself and whatever might come of it, to ask her candidly the affair.

On one occasion among the rest that he spied her alone, he brought her a

(1) An Italian buffoon who gave rise to a few proverbs of this kind.

salad from his garden, for he had the finest cabbage lettuce and cardoon ever you did see, and, after having given it to her, goes and sits down right before her, ogled her a while with rivetted eyes, then bluntly began to address her these words : « Hark ye ! look how pretty she » is to-day, this dear Tonia ! By the Gos- » pel, I know not what I have done for » you. Oh ! you appear to me fairer than » that Saint Anthony which Fruosino di » Meo Puliti had recently painted in our » church, for the salvation of his soul, of » that of Monna Pippa, his wife and his » sister's. Which lady of Pistoja is so » pleasing and handsome as you ? See if » those two lips do not resemble the » border of my chasuble for festival days. » Oh ! what happiness it would be to » even bite them and the mark thereof » to remain until vintage-time ! Faith, I » swear to you by the seven virtues of » the mass, if I was not a priest and you » to be married, I should do for you as » much as I should have you at my dis- » cretion. Oh ! the delicious feasts I

» should make on you ! The deuce take
» it if I should not get rid of the rage
» which you have put into my belly ! »
Tonia remained, while the gentleman
was uttering these words, as half vexed,
smiling under the corner of her eye, and
one while staring him, another appa-
rently willing to threaten him. When he
had ended his fine harangue, she, while
somewhat shaking her head, answered
him : — « Ah ! monseignor, come, come ;
» you have no need to be jeering me,
» that would be better ; and if I please
» you not, it does so long as I please my
» Ciarpaglia. » The priest, who already
thought himself sure of his affair and
shook with joy like a little wagtail,
stretching out his chin forwards as a
man, you would say, who was wasting
away, took courage on hearing her speak
thus, and continued : — « Happy if you
» pleased me much less, my jewel, for
» you compel me to do nothing else but
» go and come this way to see you. Oh !
» what would I not give to be able to
» feel only once these two little pigeons

» which you have in your corset ! They
» make me burn quicker than a quat-
» trino-candle beside the altar ! — And
» what the deuce would you really pay ? »
replied then la Tonia ; « you are more
» niggardly than a cock. Faith, he who
» names a priest, names a beggar, and
» perhaps you are not going at once to
» widen your sash ! as if I did not know
» the other day, when I asked you for
» these galoches, you made a step-
» mother's face at me ; one would have
» said I was asking you for something
» excessive. I know right enough that
» if your neighbour, the Mencaglia, want-
» ed to obtain anything from Tenten-
» nino's wife, he was obliged to pay for
» her half of the petticoat, which she got
» made for last All-Saints-Day. You are
» not ignorant that it is not of finer Ro-
» magnol (1) than may be had in this
» place and the cloth alone is worth twelve
» livres, without counting lining, laces,

(1) Sort of coarse woollen cloth, used by peasants.

» ribbons and the make which cost him
» a treasure. — By the body of Saint
» Nothing at all, my dear Tonia, » cried
out the priest; « you are a thousand times
» wrong, for I am more open handed
» with the women than I know not who,
» and I never go to town without spend-
» ing at least two bolognini (1) with
» the lovely she-Christians who remain
» behind the Prior's Palace. Conse-
» quently, think of what I would do for
» you who have that pretty little form
» there; you have so well stirred up my
» liver and tripes, that I have no longer
» any leisure to despatch a mouthful of
» the Office and, to tell you the truth, I
» am afraid you have bewitched me. »
Madam, the cunning, hearing such fine
promises, wished to make a trial of him
and told him that she would be happy to
give herself to him for his pleasure, on
the condition that he would bind himself

(1) Small money of Bologna; the bolognino was worth six quattrini; the quattrino was the sixtieth part of a livre.

to buy her a pair of yellow serge sleeves, large and bordered with green velvet, also green ribbons which they place in the hair and let float in the wind, a green thread-net with its ear-knot, and besides to lend her three bolognini which she wanted to go and recover a piece of linen at the weaver's ; if not, that he had only to go to Pistoja for those lovely she-Christians who used to serve him for his two bolognini. The poor priest, who had his clapper already quite prepared to attach it to the bell, unwilling to lose so fine an opportunity, promised her not only the sleeves, but the petticoat together with an under one, and he already wanted to thrust his hand into her hair when she, rather seeming to effect her whimsical flirting, cried : « Oh, ho ! » Dom Giovanni, my darling, look » quickly if you do not chance to have » in your pocket these few pence I asked » of you ; I am in the greatest need of » them and, to tell you the truth, my » man has not a stitch of a shirt to put » on his back. » The good priest would

have most willingly dealt on credit, as he of Varlungo; he tried to come at it by stating that he had not them about him, but that, when the Complines were ended, he would go straight to the church, would look into the candle-boxes if there was enough in them to make up the amount and would bring it back to her directly. But la Tonia, remarking how he was imposing upon her, pretended she was becoming angry and said to him on looking sour : « Did I not tell you that you were » as wide as the plain of Pistoja? Walk » out, by the cross of God, you shall not » lay a hand upon me, if you do not first » shell me out those few pence. In good » earnest, it is to your class we must go » to school, you who will not sing unless » you are paid beforehand and at once. » It suffices, I think, if I am willing to » wait for the rest until you have gone » to town; but of this trifle I am in greater want than I could mention. — Look » here now, do not get angry, my Tonia, » cried Dom Giovanni on hearing her making these Jeremiades, « I am

» going to see if I do not chance to have
» them about me. » He pulled out, all in
speaking thus, a certain small purse
which he carried in his breeches full of
holes, and pressed it so heavy, not with-
out many wry faces, that he made six half-
pence jump out of it, and gave them to
her while counting them out one by one.
He had no sooner let hold of them than
she, all merry, led him away to make his
bells chime a little, into a neighbouring
barn, and they met each other more than
once in the same place until he had to go
to Pistoja. When he was on his return,
whether he had lost his memory, or it
grieved him to spend his money, he only
bought the net, which he brought her
when coming to see her, and apologized
because he had forgotten the sleeves at
home ; he promised to fetch them to her
the next day and knew so well how to
wheedle her, that taking the net, she
was still pleased to return with him into
the barn. But one day passed, then an-
other, and the nasty gent brought her
neither sleeves nor cuffs ; la Tonia began

to be vexed and one fine evening let loose at him some complimentary language. He who had pretty fairly shaken his donkey's bridle, and thinking that it she wanted sleeves, she had only to buy them, replied to her so briskly that she was highly displeased with him and resolved to avenge herself. « Away, away, » petticoats, fit for caging, » she said to herself, all in reproaching herself with her folly, « if I make you not repent for » it, may a fever light upon, and do away » with, me ! I have been silly to entangle » myself with so despicable a brood, as » if I had not heard it said a thousand » times that they are all of the same sa- » vour ; but let it lie there for this time. » The better to show what her anger was, she remained three or four days without even caring to look at him, then in order to be the more easily able to avenge herself on him according to the scheme she had conceived, she began again by coaxing him with a thousand nice little words and, without speaking about the

sleeves, feigned she had made peace with him.

One day among the rest, when the moment seemed to her propitious for the execution of what she had resolved upon, she called him very softly, told him how her Ciarpaglia had gone to Cutigliano and begged him, if he wished to treat himself to some agreeable pleasure with her, to come to the house for her about Nones-time, that she would be alone and expecting him; that if by chance he did not find her in, to kindly wait a while, it would not be long before she was back. Ask not whether Dom Caprone felt happy at a like request; he stood upon his pantofles, saying to himself: « I was much » surprised too at her being so long » about falling in love with me; you see » the pair of sleeves has not caused her » great spite. I was a fool to give her » anything at all, and it would be all » the same now; but do you know » what it is, Dom Giovanni? If you » do not overtake your money from » the devil, you will be still a greater

» fool. » While talking away to himself these and other words, he was awaiting the appointed hour, and it had no sooner come than he did as the woman had bade him. The rogue had that morning related to her husband how the priest had more than once requested her for her virtue, and what you have just heard was unani- mously agreed upon among them, in order to inflict a severe chastisement upon him. As soon as she perceived Dom Gio- vanni entering, she beckoned to Ciarpaglia as well as to one of his brothers, who were both watching out for the mo- ment, and, preceding them softly, went off for the gallant, already tumbled into bed, with his legs thrown up. Dom Gio- vanni had no sooner espied her than, without fearing anything, he went to meet her, saluting her politely, wanted to throw his arms round her neck and kiss her in the French fashion; but he had hardly time to accost her, when Ciarpaglia ap- peared in an instant in crying out like a madman : « Ah, hah ! you whoremonger » of a priest ! tonsured pate ! wait, wait till I

» bounce upon you, damned dog!
» Is that the way the good Reli-
» gious conduct themselves, eh? May
» God heap calamities on you, you beg-
» gar's get! Go and herd swine! Be off
» to the stable, and not to the church to
» govern Christians!» Then turning
aside to the brother, in a rage that had
no equal: « Let me have at him, get out
» of my way,» continued he; « don't be
» holding me, I tell you, if not I fall
» upon yourself; leave it to me: I want
» to bleed my sacred whore of a wife,
» and I wish to eat this traitor's heart,
» red hot, red hot!» While he was utter-
ing these words, the priest, pissing in
his breeches with fright, had stuck him-
self under the bed and began weeping
crocodile tears, and to cry out for mercy
with all the force of his throat; but it was
so much chaff thrown against the wind,
because Ciarpaglia was thoroughly deter-
mined that it should be this time the lay-
men who would impose penance on the
priest. He had in this very room a large
chest, which lay there since the time of his

great grandfather, in which he used to lock up his wife's sash, petticoat, colored sleeves and her other things. He opened it, flung out all the gewgaws that were inside and, dragging the priest from under the bed, made him pull down his breeches, which the latter had, while waiting for la Tonia, already unlaced, not to let her languish too long, as I guess; he seized his testicles, which the gent had stout and of fair length, like a man accustomed to remain often without drawers in women's company about mid-day, put them into the chest, nailed down the lid, then with a huge rusty key which was there hung upon a nail, stuffed the lock-hole, and having got the brother to give him a certain razor all nicked with which his wife used to shave him sometimes on Saturdays, he laid it upon the chest, without saying any more, drew the room-door after him and was off to his work.

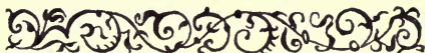
The unfortunate priest, thus left in the state you may imagine, felt at first such pain, that he had almost liked to faint. Fortunately, the lock was so dislocated

that the bolt scarcely entered the hasp, so that a finger's breadth was wanting before the lid touched the rim of the chest ; our hero then felt quite at first but little or no harm. Nevertheless, every time he saw the razor and thought of the place where he had been seized, such agony pressed on his heart, that he wondered he was not yet dead ; had he not forced himself to keep at his ease a while in saying to himself, that they only wanted to frighten him, that they would not be long before coming to free him from this torture, I believe he would have been really dead. After he had remained pretty long undecided between doubt and hope, seeing nobody was coming to his aid and his flesh, in beginning to get swollen, was causing him considerable suffering, he set to crying for help. No help came ; he then undertook to break the lock. The only result he obtained was to tire himself, and, while fatiguing himself, to pull off the tumefying flesh ; the more it tumefied, the more insupportable was the pain ; he then ceased from exciting him-

self and began again to implore assistance, to beg for mercy. Assistance did not yet come, mercy was dumb, and the pain increased every minute; despairing of getting safely out of the affair, he took hold of the razor, in the firm resolution to have done with a like agony, even at the price of his life; but at once seized by a cowardly weakness and compassion for himself, he cried out while weeping :
« O my God! shall I ever have against
» myself the cruelty of exposing myself
» to so evident a danger? Cursed be la
» Tonia and the first day I saw her! »
Then oppressed by an unexpressible torment, which prevented him from opening his mouth, he remained silent. Some time after, he fixed his eyes on the razor, took hold of it again and, slightly grazing the skin, tried how it hurted him; but he had hardly drawn it nigh, when there came over him such a cold sweat, a dread, a swoon, that he felt himself fainting off. No longer knowing what to do, worn out by fatigue, he stretched himself on his belly upon the chest, and while now

whining, now sighing, now yelling, now offering himself to God, now blaspheming, the pain exasperated him and became so quick that, being no longer able to bear it, he saw himself forced to make use of the only means which remained to him for his deliverance. Making of necessity a virtue, he grasped the razor, exercised on himself the vengeance of Ciarpaglia and separated himself from his privy parts. The operation caused him so terrible a pain that he dropped down half dead, heaving bellowings which very much resembled those of a wounded bull. The folks that Ciarpaglia had carefully fetched came running at this noise, and they did so much by the aid of I know not what charms and mumery peculiar to themselves, that the priest got off without loss of life : if however that may be called living for a man, to exist without that which makes a man. Such were the end and result that the venerable priest's love had.





SISTER APPELLAGIA,

shutting herself up in her cell while the others were at prayer, finds a singular remedy against the temptations of the flesh ; this remedy does not please the Abbess at all, and the sister is sent away from the Convent.

ROMANCE V



HERE was at Perugia and you may still see there to-day a very rich monastery, crowded with noble Perugian ladies, who, for want of knowing my excellent receipt, had erred from their father's rule, Saint Benedict. Most of the Nuns, perhaps all, being thoroughly in accord with the Abbess, occupied themselves only in procuring themselves those pleasures of which the want

of a dowry, the papas' avarice, the mammas' preferences, the step-mothers' jealousy or other similar accidents, had deprived them, and they had carried them to such a pitch that one might easily find virtue everywhere, save in this Convent. The Bishop was therefore obliged, far more by the complaints which the folks of the place had on many and many occasions made him, than by any vigilance or solicitude on his part, to find some remedy against their disorderly life; consequently, he ordered a part of them, chiefly those who, grown old in wickedness, were but little fit to enter on a new life, to be sent away; he kept the rest and added to them a certain number of girls, as well lay as those chosen in other monasteries of purer morals. There was among the latter a venerable matron, who remained more than forty years in the convent of Monte-Lucci in a very great odor of holiness, and whom he proposed for the management of all and named her, as Abbess. By force of edicting new rules, by keeping strictly to the old ones in preaching

the example, by repeating good admonitions, she at length brought the house to a suitable observance.

This Abbess had ordered, among other prescriptions, that, between None and Vespers, at the chiming of a hundred bells which she took the greatest care to have rung, all the Nuns should be bound to betake themselves every day to the chapel, or their cells, or wherever they would like best, and to remain there one half hour in prayer, to beseech the good Lord God to remove from them all evil temptations which might come from the flesh; the one she saw placing most fervor in this practice, she considered to be of better will in living well than any other, believing, and she was not mistaken, that the sting of the flesh once mastered, all the rest would be easy. But for the reason that what is the outcome of violence does not last long and pestilent water easily spreads again over its former bed, it turned out that among the old ones, those who had remained, a certain Sister Appellagia, both young and

pretty, could no longer endure to have, in order to satisfy her already corrupted appetite, but the sounds of bells and prayers. She had, previous to the reforms, fallen in love with a young man of Perugia, who was very rich and noble, enjoying great favor under Giovan-Paolo Baglione; he too loved her exceedingly, and they had so well known how to act that they were often together in the Nun's cell from three to four jolly hours consecutively, the jolliest ever you witnessed. This was done so secretly, that it was almost impossible for any one to perceive it, but as she could not, through fear of giving the alarm, remain locked up with him all day long in her room, as she would have wished, and besides she was obliged to keep with the other sisters in the Monastery, for the usual exercises of the house, as soon as she heard the blessed bell, she ran quickly to her cell, under pretext of the said prayer, so quickly that she seemed going up to Paradise; the Abbess, who had never suspected anything, seeing her so exact in

this intention, had conceived the highest opinion of her.

There arrived one day, among many others, that one of the ancient Nuns having gone into the garden to gather a little salad to be sent to some relation, when the temptation bell began ringing, the good Nun, for fear the factotum might go away without the salad, left the prayer aside and finished by filling her little basket. Tidings of this misdeed were immediately carried to the Abbess who, having called the delinquent before her, made a noise over it, holla, great God! Among other things she said to her, and what stung her most was, that she should take as a model Sister Appellagia, who never found herself so busy in anything of no matter how much importance, but she very quickly left it the moment she heard that bell ringing. When the Nun, who was perhaps better acquainted with the young brood of the Convent than the Abbess, saw herself reproached by the example of Sister Appellagia, she would listen no further and all in a rage said to

herself: « To be sure, I must indeed see
» whence come so much fervor and de-
» votion ; there is some puss at the bot-
» tom of it, oh ! yes, and I shall discover
» some dodge, if I go about it. Good, I
» am determined to find out what she
» goes to do in her cell ; let, let to mor-
» row come ; oh ! yes, I am going to
» make the whole Convent laugh. »
While speaking to herself in this way,
and pregnant with an evil will, she wait-
ed till the next day for the hour when
the temptation bell was ringing ; the
moment having come, the cursed Nun,
as soon as she saw Sister Appellagia run-
ning to her cell in order to flee the tempt-
ation, softly drew near the door, carved
out with the blade of a knife a hole in a
certain opening which was stuffed inside
by a sheet of paper, and discovered how
the learned young damsel had found the
true means of freeing herself from tempt-
ation. She set off all merry, without
making the slightest noise, to the Abbess,
related to her how things stood and
brought her to see the game of backgam-

mon. I could never describe to you the intense pain and trouble which the poor Abbess felt on learning so hideous a story: it seemed to her indeed that she had lost her time and pains in effecting so many reforms. Fired with rage, she went to Appellagia's cell, had the door forcibly opened, entered, and beholding with her eyes what she never had perhaps done even in her imagination, had liked to fall upon the ground through grief; then, turning towards the little Nun, called her the grossest names that were ever addressed to woman of this kind taken in a similar case. « That was then, » wicked female, you Devil's get, the » motive of your devotion! It is for that » you showed yourself so prompt in run- » ning to lock yourself up in your cell, » you nasty, barefaced, impudent imp! » Therefore, the teachings inculcated » on you, the warnings given you, the » new reforms have all produced this » fine fruit! Is it for this I left Monte- » Lucci to be witness of such ignominy, » to behold with my eyes within the

» space of two months what I had no
» even imagined in thought during forty
» years ! May it not please God for me
» to stay any longer here, that I should
» have a heart to live in a place where
» the enemy of God has so much power
» and audacity ! » Having addressed these
words and many more to the young
girl, she wished to say nothing to him
who was with her, like a woman that
knew him well and that he was not a
man to be alarmed by a scratch, but that
he should remember him of the great
number of young men who had to her
own knowledge turned out bad, for hav-
ing desired to commit so filthy an ou-
trage against the Lord God, that he
should take care against it, after having
offended Him who would have too well
the means of avenging himself. Returning
then to the Sister, she added : « For this
» one, the profligate, I shall well know
» how to inflict such a chastisement as
» will be in proportion to so enormous
» a sin. » But Appellagia, who was begin-
ning to grow tired of these cuffs, could

not bear them any longer and displaying a countenance which would have made one say : « She is the beautiful and good, » spoke in this manner : — « Madam, you » make much ado about nothing, and, » in my mind you are a thousand » times wrong. Tell me, prithee, why » have you prescribed that every day at » the sound of the bell we offer up a » private orison, if it be not that every » one of us be delivered from the tempt- » ation of the flesh ? What better means » could you therefore invent than the » one I have found as for the present ? » What road will be so good and sure to » take, that this temptation may cause us » no annoyance ? The *Pater noster* and » *Ave Maria* of your invention seem to » me to quicken it, very far from extin- » guishing it, whereas if I operate a few » times daily in my own way, I can after » going off to bed be as free and rid of » these fantasies as I wish all the Nuns » of the Convent to be. Consequently, » to conclude a thousand times at once, » either allow me to preserve myself

» from temptation as I understand it, or
» give me leave to go where I think fit ;
» for my part, I do not intend to bother
» every day the ears of the Lord good
» God, to find myself every night with
» worse temptations than ever. »

The Abbess, on hearing her give so impudent an answer, considered that it would be better policy and more profitable to the monastery to pack her off than to keep her against her will ; she was besides begged, or rather requested, to do so by the young man, more accustomed at the time to give orders than to make supplications. It seemed a thousand years to her until she was out of her sight ; she therefore gave her leave to go away wherever she liked according to her own good will. On the same night the little strumpet went off to sleep at the young man's house, and she delivered herself from the temptation of the flesh during long months, without any need of waiting for the sound of the bell.



ONE OF TWO FRIENDS

falls in love with a Widow who robs him of all he possesses, then turns him out; he, thanks to the assistance of the other, regains her favors, then, finding her flirting with a new lover, kills both of them. He is sentenced to death and set free through his friend's mediation.

ROMANCE VI



HERE lived at Florence, many long years ago, two young men of high descent and great wealth, the one called Lapo Tornaquinci, the other Niccolo of the Albizi, who had, from their earliest boyhood, contracted so close a friendship, that one would have fancied they could live only together.

They were continuing in this intimate way ever since ten years, when Niccolo's father departed this life, leaving his son more than thirty thousand ducats' worth of goods, and as Lapo was in need of, for some affair of his, a hundred ducats, Niccolo not only obliged him with the amount, without even waiting to be asked for it, but entreated him to consider himself, as much as he himself, master of his fortune: tokens indeed of a truly noble and virtuous soul, worthy of causing the fairest hopes to be conceived, had not the too emancipated youthfulness, naturally prone to evil, the wealth acquired without work, and the somewhat unpraiseworthy frequentings, engaged him in a wicked life. Indeed, as he followed the example of those who at night go to bed poor and rise in the morning rich, after having long drudged in misery, he soon had around him a gang of fellows of so depraved a life, that they would have removed the aureola from the greatest Saint's head; and those keeping company with him one while at dinner, another

while at supper, bringing him to such and such a feast, leading him to the house of some lost woman, and thence to another, made him squander so much money that it was really a pity. His friend, being a very sober and reserved young man, on seeing this, was grieved to the very bottom of his heart and was all day long behind him to recall him to righteousness, to rebuke him for his wrongs, in fine, to render him all the kind acts to which the close friendship they had together bound him ; but all this remained as if he had said nothing ; his late comrades had, with their dishonorable pastimes and bad counsels, more sway over him than Lapo with his wise warnings ; and these fellows, who vere watching his movements, related so much evil to Niccolo about him, cried him down in such a manner, that after having begun by detaching himself from him, he ended by fleeing from him, thus intimating that he intended to live in his own way. Lapo, being once sure of the fact, ceased through weariness from being always

after him, and, unable to do anything for him, let him conduct himself as he pleased. The upshot was that the poor young man, continuing to live as he ought not to do, saw an event befall him of which he was but little thinking.

Just at the time there was at Florence a handsome and graceful young Widow of comely manners, who having contracted the habit, even during the life-time of her husband, of preferring money to honor, without casting a further thought on the family in which she was born or that into which she had entered by marriage, the both being of great nobility, easily gratified young men with her love, provided they were not only fine fellows in appearance, but had especially their purses well filled. So that she had, as well since her widowhood as before it, secretly nibbled away the wings of more than one pair, showing herself in other respects a second Saint Bridget in the eyes of whoever was not particularly acquainted with her. At the first tidings she had of Niccolo's fortune and the existence he

was leading, she at once founded great projects on him, and, having procured the means of engaging in a slight acquaintance, tacitly began to show herself smitten by him; then, gradually manifesting the thing, as if she could not keep it concealed, she set to enticing him day and night by letters and messengers. I have no need to tell you whether Niccolo, who had been informed by his friends how he was a new Gerbino, was doing the big fellow with them; happy was he who could stick in his little word to flatter him, to congratulate him on his late love and extol the lady to the skies! Every one got out of him on this occasion splendid suppers, plentiful dinners; they wound him up so well, that he had no longer any content except when in their company or talking of her with these idle rascals. She knew so nicely how to get round him, that, while pretending she was dying of love, she succeeded in finding herself alone with him, to do what she had already done with many others; and as she was pretty, graceful, as already

stated, she knew how to make a man dote upon her better than any strut who had spent twenty years on fair greens, sometimes using the mildest expressions in the world, sometimes the harshest, to-day feigning she is unable to live any longer, so much she loved him, and to-morrow making him jealous with a new sweet-heart, warning him that the moment was come to wed her, then wishing it no longer, banging her door into his face, again running after him, at another time pretending to be big with child, she so much exasperated the poor wretch, that he no longer knew even in what land he was living. All things else had gone out of his head, his affairs remained at random, the new friends as well as the old were thrown aside; diversions, games, suppers were all, all for her, when she wished and as she wished them. From the moment she perceived that the bird had no further need of being tamed, she set her mind only about thoroughly clipping his wings, so that he could not fly away, and she succeeded in it pretty well,

not only to estrange Lapo, who was his true friend, but to create mischief in the hearts of his other friends of jovial time, who had themselves thrown him into her clutches: it seemed to them all that the lovely lady racked out of him came from their own purses, and they were a thousand times right, for the strut finally reduced him by her craft and intrigues to such an extremity that, far from being able to give them a dinner or supper, he had not left even enough to live quite alone.

When he saw himself arrived at this fatal stop, he recognized how much better he would have done by lending an ear to the hard advice of the kind friend, than to the flatteries of his new favorites, and understood besides what a wretched end the love of these women always has, who offer the pleasure of their bodies to the first come, not indeed through tender affection, but through greediness for money. Lucrezia (I now remember this lady's name), seeing the crown pieces were beginning to be mis-

sing with him and that he would be soon run out, had nevertheless known how to carry out her mock love to the end ; she then began to assume such manners with respect to him, that he could well perceive how dimly her fire was blazing. What smartened him most, was the discovery of a new amorous caprice in his mistress : having recently learned that a certain Simone Davizi had, by his father's death, become very wealthy, she grew enamoured of him instantaneously, to such a degree as to be mad after him, and had completely forgotten Niccolo. A wise, prudent and fortunate young woman, truly ! She knew so well how to read in his eyes and instruct his heart, that she discovered beauty among men in proportion as she saw they had gold or silver, and she felt most love when she heard the jingle of most crown pieces ! Niccolo clearly saw that his affairs were daily going from bad to worse, that he was treated ignominiously by her whom he cherished more than his life ; but far from diminishing himself in ratio to these

outrages, his love or, to speak more properly, his rage increased every day; he wanted by all means to be with her as in the past, finding no chance for it, and, full of wrath, spite, he thundered, when alone, both against her and himself; he knew not on what to set his mind and his state would have inspired pity. The friends of the jovial time, having come with his fortune, with his fortune had gone away; his relations would see him no more; the neighbours made a laughing-stock of him; the strangers used to say: « Much good I wish him; » wicked tongues persecuted him; Lucrezia no longer knew him. Having well and duly considered all this on several occasions, he fell into such despair that he deliberated, as a last resource, on putting an end by some horrible death to a like suffering, and perhaps he would have put his idea into execution had he not, while recalling to mind the close friendship which had united him to Lapo and considering it as sure that the latter must not have lost the remembrance of so tender an affec-

tion, thought it would be well on his part to go and see him, leaving aside all false shame, to relate to him his mishap and to beg his pardon for God's sake. He therefore went to him, without further converse with himself, and did what he had resolved upon.

Lapo who had, as they say, let three loaves pass for a couple, being unable to prevent it, did not fail to take pity on him, seeing him according to his own acknowledgments, plunged into a completer ruin than he would have supposed; he was greatly afflicted at it and knowing that his friend was in more need of help than counsel, said kindly to him: « Nic-
» colo, I do not wish to act like those
» who, after having warned their friend
» to no purpose, reproach him with not
« having listened to their advice; those,
» I think, seek only to glorify themselves
» in blaming whoever has not lent an
» ear to their warnings. You are aware
» that, when I saw you entering into
» that way which led you to where I
» should rather you were not, I fulfilled

» in your regard with my words the duty
» of a kind friend. Now that you are
» arrived at the end, it is not words
» which any longer suffice, and I mean
» not to fail by my acts in the same
» duty. I shall act as if I had sinned
» with you, and with you I shall un-
» dergo penance, sweet penance indeed,
» since it will give me the opportunity
» of showing what my heart is to my
» friend. The duty I wish to fulfil is so
» laudable and worthy of recommendation
» as it has always been, but a very small
» number of men have discharged it,
» and this is the clearest proof of its
» merit; I, too, desire to be reckoned
» among this small number, and, leaving
» words aside, wish to show you the
» effects. Come therefore with me. »

He took him by the hand, without saying any more, led him into his room and having opened a box in which he placed his money, gave him such a quantity of it, that Niccolo might judge how much he loved him; he next exhorted him by kind words to be again of good heart

and made him understand that, when this money would be spent, he would not fail to supply him with more, as much and as often as he should want it. After having made him so generous a present and given such bright hopes for the future, Lapo began in a most friendly tone to criticize somewhat his past life, to blame his connexion with that woman; and these words had such influence over Niccolo that, if they did not dislodge her at once from his thoughts, they nevertheless infused into his heart a certain regret for what he had done and excited a certain shame in him; he still loved her against his will, he still desired some occasion to extinguish so strong a passion. But the treacherous female was not long before finding out that he was largely supplied again; conjecturing that everything had turned out to her greater advantage and not wishing to let him slip from her, she began a second time to importune him by letters, messengers, and so frequently that Niccolo was obliged to let himself be locked again in her

arms. She got him to understand that he was finer than ever ; that she more than ever wished him well ; that all which sprung up between them was no fault of hers, but that of some relations or I know not of what housemaid ; that the over great love he bore her, that love which often causes the safest eye to see wrongly, had rendered him jealous about a thing which was neither true nor near being so ; and she knew so nicely how to fool him, that she screwed many crown pieces out of his scratchers. She would have lugged them all out of him, had it not haply come to pass, as his cursed destiny would have it, that, one night among others while he was with her and had fallen asleep from tiresomeness, after the amorous pleasures, she, who was not yet asleep, heard by certain understood signs her new lover passing before the house. Allured by her evil fortune, which was inviting her to render an account of her sins, she persuaded herself that Niccolo had, as they say, tied the ass to the right peg, and she

longed to go as far as the door to amuse herself a while with the other. She got up, threw a light covering over her shoulders, descended quite softly, quite softly to a small back door, opened it and made the lover come in, who did not greatly object to it. One word brings on another, from words people easily pass to acts; they deemed themselves in such security owing to the deep sleep of Niccolo, that they remained thus far longer than was needed. Niccolo woke up just in the middle of the affair and, not finding Lucrezia near him, was greatly surprised; he called her several times, she gave no answer, which caused him to suspect the truth. He immediately jumped to his feet, dressed himself as best he could while groping in the dark, and having stuck a sword in his belt softly came to where they were; before either of the two noticed anything, he was at their pillow and beholding them stretched on bags of flower, he was all of a sudden carried off with such wrath, such madness, that, without reflecting on what he

was doing, he drew his sword and dealt both of them at once a so well directed thrust that he almost lopped off Simone's head, while grievously wounding the woman's arm; then, his ire only increasing, he redoubled the thrusts and ceased only when he saw they were both dead, side by side. All the inmates of the house came running at this hubbub, they began to bewail the amiable young woman and each one had his word to stick in; as to Niccolo, as if he made no question about the crime he had just committed, he walked out of the house, persuaded that he had performed a great feat. Being still all furious, holding in his hand the sword reeking with blood, he directed his course in running towards the house of Lapo, quite delighted to go and laugh with him over so fine an exploit, when he just fell into a squadron of the Bargello, who, on seeing him running in such a manner and that simply by his looks he must be guilty of some misdeed, laid hands on him and led him directly into prison. There, without there being any need

of pressing or torturing him, he confessed how the thing had taken place and, found guilty of manslaughter, was sentenced to death. But his generous friend deemed that this was the moment to show what the greatness, the force of friendship may be; he did so much, in getting himself aided by relations, by friends, by the quibbles of judges and weighty sums of money, that he saved his life for him : his pain was changed into a perpetual exile at Barletta, in Apulia. That did not yet satisfy him; he condemned himself to a voluntary exile, and forsaking his sweet and pleasing country, went off to remain abroad with Niccolo, in a wretched land where he supplied his wants out of his personal fortune. Lapo brought back the wandering mind of his friend to the study of literature, for so long abandoned, to a thousand other praiseworthy occupations, and the both had themselves highly esteemed by the lords of the land, by the king in particular. The latter obtained in the process of time leave from the magistrates

of Florence for Niccolo to live at Naples as long as he liked, and, they both lived there very honorably until the end of his days. When he was dead, Lapo had him conveyed to Florence and buried at San-Pier-Maggiore after a splendid funeral, in an honorable grave with his other kindred: he likewise ordered that after his own death he should be also buried in the same grave, that death itself should not separate these bodies whose souls could never, even in the midst of most trying accidents, separate.







THE SEWED UP BRIDE

Mister Agnolo Firenzuola's Romance, recently taken place and gathered up after public report.

ROMANCE VII



HERE still lived in the city of Florence, not very many months ago, a certain Zanobi di Piero del Cima, one of those good Christians who recommend themselves to the Crucifix of San-Giovanni, Chiarito or San-Pier-del-Murrone; he had almost more confidence in the Annunciation of San-Marco than in that of the Servites, and used to say that it was older, painted in a more quaint way; he gave some other reasons for it, such as the Angel's pro-

file was sharper, the dove was whiter, and other like motives: I know he let himself be carried off more than once to severely upbraid the Prior, because he did not keep it veiled, stating that nothing had given so great a reputation to that of the Servites and the Cintola of Prato, as the showing them with much ado and so many ceremonies. With all that, he was a fine fellow; he often went to confession, fasted every Saturday, assisted at Compline on all festival days, and what he vowed to these Crucifixes, he observed as scrupulously as people weigh pepper, even though it clearly cost him some money, for, from the thread to the needle he spent on them thirty-three and one third per cent of his income, at least, at least. In this way, without wife or children, he led the easiest and quietest life in the world with an old woman who was in his house for forty years.

This good old man therefore, desirous of cutting a figure among the consuls of his Art, made a vow to the Hanged, I

mean to the Crucifixes which were in the chapel of the Giocondi, in the Oratory of the Sèrvites, that if he obtained this dignity he would give a hundred pounds of white silver, as a dowry, to some poor young lass. He was heard and this is a mighty miracle, for these Crucifixes were not yet finished with painting : fancy what they would be now able to do that they are achieved ! It is true they are legion. The simple fellow was no sooner out of the urn than he, quite overwhelmed with joy and a countenance eager for compliments, gave an account of his vow to his Confessor, a certain Ser Giulano Bindi, rector or chaplain of the church San-Remo, and looked upon as a little saint. The latter mentioned to him a certain Monna Mechera da Calenzano of whom folks had blabbed I know not what, at a time when he himself was a young man ; but I should affirm nothing about it on any account, for it is a sin to think evil and a still greater one to speak of monks and especially of those who hear confessions, who with down cast

eyes say mass and who have the care of souls, as well as the affairs of widows. Suffice it to say that he bore her affection and that, every time she came to Florence, she used to stay at his house with all her luggage. He warned her of what was up, and she was off at once in search of Zanobi and entreated him for God's sake to kindly give these alms to a daughter of hers that she had already grown up and fit for wedlock, and pennyless. Thanks both to the priest's assistance and all her clever coaxings, the silly fellow promised her the aforesaid alms and passed her his handwriting for it, stating therein that as soon as the girl would be up for getting married, he bound himself to hand her out a hundred pounds in ready cash. Others have asserted that he made her no writing, but simply promised it to her by word of mouth, and that he gave the husband the writing later on; this is more likely, and agrees better with what you are going to see. Be the truth then as it may and let every one understand it in

his own way; I wish to have nobody's reproaches.

The gay old woman, once in possession of the writing or promise, returned home quite merry and set herself on the look out to marry her daughter. By means of the priest of Calenzano, who was altogether devoted to her, she found a pretty suitable husband; but he, as soon as they had shaken hands, whether he had as a gage the written engagement from Zanobi, or whether he received it from the mother-in-law, having made the match and given the ring, was obliged to set out and spend a few weeks at Chianti, on I know not what business, and he left with the intention of celebrating the wedding on his return. It turned out that he was staying away much longer than he thought, so much so that Monna Mechera, believing he would not come back, was tempted to do a very funny thing and to even get at the hundred pounds. How she worked her daughter up to it and what her own end could really be, I cannot easily imagine;

suffice it to say she cast her eyes upon her neighbour, a certain big booby, as he was going to his work, and he must be from twenty-four to twenty-five years old, at most; although he acted the gawk, he was not for all that a bad sort of a rake, and was called Menicuccio dalle Prata. She took him aside and said to him: « Menicuccio, whenever you wish » to do me a great favor, without its cost- » ing you anything, without your run- » ning any risk, you will be the means » of my finding one hundred pounds, as » if I picked them up in the street, and » at the same time, you will be the cause » that my Sabatina » (this was the daughter's name), « may not turn out bad. » Here is the way. A Florentine has promised me to give her, if I got her » married, one hundred pounds as a » dowry, and, as you are aware, I have » betrothed her to Giannella del Man- » gano, who has gone since to the end of » the world and has had me informed that » he would not wed her, that he would » by no means return, if I did not first

» send him the hundred pounds. This
» Florentine, who had promised them to
» me, will not give them, unless I first
» get the young lass married, so that I
» know not what course to take ; the one
» is almost right, the other is not wrong,
» and with all this my darling Sabatina
» suffers. To tell you the truth, I am
» heartily sick of it, and since a few days,
» it seems to me I feel some imp getting
» into my belly, on seeing all day long
» flitting about here certain town-birds,
» that do not at all please me. She is
» pretty and you know what happens, espe-
» cially when there is no man in a house ;
» folks respect nothing, so much the
» worse for the one that is not rich. I
» should like you to assist me in getting
» hold of this money, and it would be
» easy, if you wish to set your eye about
» it. First, I will make you a present of
» a beautiful brand-new shirt with quilted
» wristbands and big grained embroidery
» round the collar, such that not one of
» our condition has so fine a one, through-
» out the neighbourhood ; then I shall

» give you so much money that you can
» buy yourself a pair of shoes and a new
» cap. » You think whether Menicuccio
held out his ear, listening to such fine
offers; he replied to Monna Mechera:
— « Faith, if this thing is possible, I shall
» most willingly set to work at it; what
» do I care? Provided I do not risk the
» bill (1). — Eh, fool! » replied Monna
Mechera, « what do you say? Do you
» think I would go and make you do the
» slightest thing to expose you to a like
» danger? God keep and preserve me from
» it. Do you know what I want? I want
» you to pretend you are my daughter's
» husband. — Oh! » replied then Meni-
cuccio; « you want me to pretend that
» I am your daughter's husband? And
» who the devil did not know him? No,
» no. — Not here, not here, » replied
Monna Mechera sharply; « not at Ca-
» lenzano, but at Florence, at Florence,
» where neither you nor he is known.

(1) The writing which was attached to the
backs of thieves, to expose them.

» We shall go all straight to Florence, I,
 » the young slip and yourself; you will
 » say you are Giannella, you will tell this
 » Florentine who promised the hundred
 » pounds that you wish to wed her at
 » once; he, as he never saw you, will
 » believe that you are the bridegroom
 » and will count you down the hundred
 » pounds; you will give them to me, in
 » this way I can put Giannella into a fix,
 » oblige him to marry, without his hav-
 » ing to tell me he wants the money,
 » and I shall get out of this embarrass-
 » ment. Otherwise, I do not see how
 » to get my hands out of it before the
 » end of the year. »

The thing seemed easy enough to Menicuccio, were it not that he feared the Florentine might know him; but the old one understood so well how to decoy him that he finally consented and exclaimed: « All-right! when I shall have to wear the mitre (1), what will it matter

(1) A bonnet in the form of a mitre which condemned malefactors wore.

» me further? I have carried the hook and
» the hogshead of wine, which is otherwise
» troublesome and heavy. But pay atten-
» tion : if you wish me to come, I want
» you, as long as the farce lasts, to give
» me a carlino per day, for the sake of
» the time I lose with you. This is what
» I earn without any risk, in working
» from one hand to the other, and they
» are everywhere asking me. » She pro-
mised him so. Thus agreed, she brought
him home, they talked over it with the
young girl and were all of the same
advice about what was to be done, in
order that the scheme might be executed
without any grave inconvenience. They
thus remained to kill the time at home
until the moment came for setting out,
and early in the morning they proceeded
towards Florence, in search of Zanobi.
Some people pretend that the young lass,
who was not silly, seeing in Menicuccio
a big white skinned blockhead, without
too much beard, a fellow fit to make
one languish, quite as well as if he had
been castrated, conceived the idea of

arranging herself in such a way as the phantom role might be acted in flesh and bones. Others have asserted that he cared far more about the young slip than Monna Mechera's promises; that while showing himself a jovial gawk, he was, as we say, a thorough blackguard, and had played many other tricks. Be it the former or the latter, I affirm nothing, but if my own opinion was asked, I should say he partook of both. They went off therefore, as I was saying, in search of Zanobi, who was just walking out from Laud in Or-San-Michele, and they told him how they were coming for the hundred pounds, because the husband, Menicuccio, as they stated, wished to conduct the young lass to church next Tuesday evening (the event took place on a Saturday), and that their intention was to buy a bed the following Monday at Prato market, and to make a thousand other preparations. The good old man was precisely back since the preceding evening from Riboja, where he had been visiting a small demesne which he intended to purchase;

he received them most kindly, and told them he was wholly at their disposal, but that he wanted to see the girl married with his own eyes, and suffered himself nowise to be played upon. Consequently, he made it a pleasure to have them to supper, to lend them a bed and dispose of everything that would be requisite, in order that the marriage might be consummated in his house, on the next evening. They were then forced to consent to what he wished. They went next morning, which was Sunday, to assist at the marriage mass, as man and wife, and, in the evening supped at Zanobi's table where they had excellent fowl galantine, puff cakes, some even state they had white wine, and abandoned themselves to all the gaiety and diversion usual in like cases between newly married couples, to the great joy of this good Christian, Zanobi, who was congratulating himself on being the cause of so happy a union, and he thought that, in reward, this Lord God still so young, disputing in the Temple, at Or-San-Mi-

chele's, near the organ, should send him some good luck this year.

When they had supped their fill, and bed hour arrived, he made the young couple understand that they were to go and sleep in a room situated half-way up the story, in the stairs, where he usually lodged his farmer, whenever he came to bring him a basket of apples. As to Monna Mechera, he told her that she would sleep with his old servant; as she wanted by all means to stay in the same room as her daughter, he explained to her how unlawful this was, and would on no account tolerate it. She held her pace, not to give suspicion to him who had not the shadow of it, but called Sabatina to her and having led her into the closet of the said room, preached her a long sermon face to face, that she should take precious good care from letting Menicuccio sow his beans in the drills of Monte-Ficale; not contented with what the cunning slip had promised and sworn to her twenty times over, she sewed her up in her chemise from head to foot with

a double threaded needle, so that it was impossible for her to get out of it ; she next called Menicuccio and after having made him swear and swear a thousand times over that he would conduct himself with her as with his own sister, she put him into bed near her daughter. She then left the room, shut the door and went away to sleep with the old servant.

The mock bridegroom and bride were not over half an hour in bed when, whether it was the heat of the blankets, or the itching of a little scab which Sabatina felt tickling her inside of her thighs, as far up as the navel, or whether she had a mind to make Menicuccio piss, to piss herself, I mean, or no matter how, she set about looking for the means of ripping the chemise, and struggled so hard with her feet and hands, that she worked herself entirely out of it. The poor boy, whose conscience was perhaps full of remorse at being in such a place, began by stretching his legs and throwing out his arms, as one does on awaking ; then, perceiving the change,

as by mere chance, laid his hands on the lass, who had succeeded in removing her chemise. She was undoubtedly a bad bed-fellow, for she set to tumbling over to his side; he did as much and they began by sticking close together. Meniccuccio, being the stronger, turned her over under himself, and administered her a pegging, and a sound one too; then thinking he had perhaps done wrong and wishing to make peace, began to embrace and kiss her as affectionately as if she had been his wife; but as she still appeared gruff and wrathfully continued poking her face against his, he grew angry again and again tossed her over under him. They stuck together in this manner seven or eight times, so well that at the end Sabatina seized the occasion, chucked him underneath in her turn, and squeezed him so tight, like grapes in a press, that she made him weep; she too had matter for whining, and wept likewise; nevertheless, she had encamped in this way so boldly that, as I believe, she must have exercised herself often before

at the struggle. At length, the hour for rising came, Monna Mechera entered the room and when she saw that the chemise was ripped, that the out-lawed had violated their ban and passed through Hollow Street butchery, she wanted at first to make a great hubbub; then, inspired with a better thought, in order not to disclose the plot, and knowing besides that she had found what she was looking for, held her pace as best she could and, turning to Menicuccio, besought him for God's sake not to mention a word about it to anybody. Without further parley, as soon as dressed, they were off to Zanobi, who was waiting for them before the kitchen fire, explaining what the Flower of virtue meant, to his old maid, who was more learned on this point than ser Sano del Cova. The gay old man wished them good morning and a happy new year, said to them « much good may » it do you, » all merry, got them a breakfast, then, in the knot of a handkerchief, to imitate Mister Pietro Fantini, handed them the hundred pounds. He

next gave them his blessing, begging them to let them see one another from time to time, packed them home again and again blessed over and over, and it never came into his head to ask back the written engagement from them. They returned all merry and glad to Calenzano, and the old lass, to pay Menicuccio what she had promised him, allowed him to take as much meat as ever he wished off the daughter: since he got his hand into the paste, she fancied that one does not soil the kneading-trough more to make twenty loaves, a hundred loaves, than to make ten.

This state of things lasted perhaps two months, until Giannella, the true husband, came back. Shortly after his return, he resolved to conclude the marriage, and, without consulting the mother-in-law, which was the cause of all the wrangling, betook himself to Florence. He met Zanobi, who was just hearing mass at the altar of the Virgin Mary, in Santa-Maria-in-Campo, and, after many roundabouts, asked him for the hundred

pounds. Zanobi, at this request, without answering a word, bursted out in laughter, thinking that this was a joke; but Giannella began to bawl out that honest men do not give their word to deny it afterwards and that, if his money was not counted down to him, he well knew where to go and see justice done him, so that Zanobi, deviating for once from his habits, was forced to get into a fury and to reply by a heap of insults, as other men. « You rascal, you robber, » he let fly at him; « where do you think you » are? in the street, perhaps. Three » months ago, Monna Mechera, the Sa- » batina and her husband came to see me, » and in my house, under my eyes per- » fectly open, consummated the marriage » with all the accustomed ceremonies; » I counted them down the money, as » at the bank, and lo now how this thief » comes to ask it from me again? It is » true I forgot to get back my written » engagement, I never thought of it, not » suspecting that any Christian could do » me what I should not do to others.

» This man must have stolen it from
» them ; but fortunately for me, I entered
» it in my book, I took a note of every-
» thing, and you can not catch me,
» wretch. If you do not get out of my
» sight, I am going to lodge a charge be-
» fore the authorities, and shall have
» you served as you deserve.» Giannella,
on seeing his bad humor, went straight
off to the Episcopal Palace, and had him
summoned. Zanobi presented himself, re-
lated to the Vicar how the thing had
taken place, and the Vicar ordered Monna
Mechera, her daughter and Menicuccio to
appear ; through them, we learned all,
even to the story of the chemise, and
how Sabatina remained, the last time,
mistress of the field. The Vicar's sentence
was, that the old hag should be flogged,
that Menicuccio should give Giannella
forty pounds, which the old one had
spent out of the hundred, to make it up
again, and that Giannella should conduct
the Sabatina to his house, without want-
ing to know whether Menicuccio had
bored her ; the latter, in order to pay

the forty pounds, was obliged to sell the barren little field he possessed. They say the Vicar passed this judgment because he had palmed the marriage mass, but it seems to me he had not palmed it : he had really married and I hold they do him a great wrong by that. He proved what *Futuro caret* means, an adage which signifies that the fruit or rather the first crop figs cost poor Menicuccio dearly. But he who possesses once for all does not always suffer.





Mister Agnolo Firenzuola's Romance on a fact which happened in the town of Prato.

ROMANCE VIII



SHOULD anybody say : « They have just caught a fox, » you would not cry out a miracle, remembering the proverb : *Foxes also allow themselves to be taken*; you would the more think that the dexterity of some clever man or the courage of some brave animal would have placed the beast in this pretty fix. But if you learned that a gentle dove, the first day she left the nest, has succeeded in taking two foxes, one of which is old, full of roguery, capable, he alone, of doing away with more poultry than four others, you would be not only amazed, but would

deem it impossible. Yet, the thing happened at Prato, in this very country, in these latter days, and if I can relate it to you as nicely as it took place, I have no doubt about making you laugh. I fear I am unable to do so; nevertheless I am going to try.

You know Santolo di Doppio del Quadro for one of these hard to cook whose arse has been boiled in chick pease, and you ignore not how he pissed more than once in the snow; he is aware on what day Saint-Blase falls and if he is asked : « Why such a thing is so? » he answers you : « Because Our Lord was born in winter. » He knows whether Epiphany is male or female, when the leap-year comes, and as he is somewhat plump, he wears no beard, except whiskers in the old fashion, he plays at chess with an apron on and goes off to market basket in hand, people fancy he is quite a simpleton, but beware of his leg! He knows his reckoning as well as another, especially when he plays at Gillet (1) with the

(1) A game of cards.

women, and never allowed himself to be kept in pawn at the public-house. He is a man of sound conscience; he would willingly help a widow who was in need of making a petticoat for her daughter fit to wed, provided he was paid back the value in wire, if not before, at least after the marriage. Good year bad year, he weaves a deal of linen in his shop, and willingly gives spinning; he likes the mellow wire, and so he pays the young lasses one drachm a pound. When he comes unexpectedly among a group of women, seated round the fire, he plants himself upon some stool, the lowest there is, and if one of them lets her spindle drop into the ashes, he picks it up and hands it to her with such a bow as nobody ever witnessed so profound a one, and then relates them certain little short, short anecdotes which cause them to strain their jaw-bones by dint of laughing. Suffice it to say he is a devotee of the Virgin Mary, but with all a jolly and kind fellow in every way; that he willingly jests; that he would all the while

play drole tricks on others, if he could, and that if anyone plays them on himself, he never grows angry.

This man therefore on hearing that one of his friends was getting married, thought on the instant of blocking up the way against the wedding, as it is the custom in this town, to obtain something from the bride and then to slight the bridegroom, who was, he too, a noble and gallant young man, accustomed all day long to take in others and to get himself nicely caught in his turn. He went off for one of his friends, one of those fine fellows to whom one has only to say : « Come », and they come, and : « Stay », and they stay; being so little habituated to say no, that before coming away with you no matter where, if another arrives who wishes to take him someplace else, simply while you are getting your cloak, he will go, for not knowing how to refuse. The most serviceable man in life; if he says to one of his comrades while playing at spotted cards « Give me the ace of denier, » and the comrade hands him thirty-two, he

answers : « All-right ; » if he asks for one of these things that float in the air and they give him a salamander, he replies : « Excellent, excellent, companion. » Never angry, never grumbling, never utters an evil word ; he would drink without being thirsty, eat without being hungry, fast without there being any Vigil, hear two masses on a week day to keep company, and do without any on Sundays ; to give pleasure, he would sleep until noon or get up before daybreak ; never eat salad in winter nor drink water in summer ; if you were melancholy, he would cheer you ; if you were gay, he would make your sides split with laughing ; he rather likes to spend money than earn it, give than receive, oblige than ask ; when he has cash, he spends it : when he has none, he lives without spending that of others ; if he borrows, he gives back : if he lends, he forgets to claim it ; tell him the truth, he believes it : tell him lies, he holds them for downright certainties ; he prefers to think of nothing than to annoy his brains about anything, and, what we

must begrudge him, is that he bears the injustices of fortune better and with a firmer soul than anybody you may know. In fine, he is the best paste that ever came from no matter what trough and one of those of whom they say, they have no gall, that they are good humored, amiable and made to please.

Santolo having therefore met him, said to him : « Fallabacchio » (such was his name), « I wish to amuse ourselves a » little with the new bridegroom, who » is wedding this evening Verdespina, » about two o'clock; I heard of it, I » know with whom the bride is going, » by which way; I reckon we shall get » enough of white money and pledges » out of them to be able to regale ourselves on two kids, and of the fattest, at » their expense. We shall invite the bridegroom to supper and we shall make » game of him. — Oh! yes, yes, » Fallabacchio replied quickly, rocking his head and squeezing Santolo between his arms with the most awkward and extravagant grimaces of which he was capable :

« Oh! we shall purchase two beautiful
 » kids, I wish to choose them myself; I
 » want them to be big and fat milk kids;
 » I shall get them bought by Matteo
 » Fagiuoli, who understands the business.
 » Oh! oh! I shall make the sauce; I
 » shall put one of the hind quarters,
 » which is so good, to boil; companion,
 » I shall dress the civet with sweet mar-
 » joram and the kidneys with eggs. Oh!
 » what a chance! how we shall guttle! Oh!
 » you know? we shall eat the livers with
 » pepper, companion's pepper, to begin
 » by; but take good care, I do not want
 » the laurel; some sage, some sage! »
 And he jumped up into the air, poisoning
 his head and added : « Oh! we must
 » indeed drink; where shall we find
 » some good wine? — Leave it to
 » me, » replied Santolo. — « Come,
 » come along, on the march! » replied
 Fallabacchio; « it seems to me a thou-
 » sand years until I am there. » Thus chat-
 ting about the supper, they waited for the
 tidings of the bride's setting out, and then
 rushed off at once before her; all in

running, for the news had come to them rather late, they, dripping with sweat and without their caps, met the cortege near the Torre degli Scrini. Those who were accompanying the bride, having perceived them from afar, said to themselves : « Here they are coming; what » must be done? » The bride quite young, as you know, full of sorrow and the tears in her eyes, so hard it seemed to her to leave her mother's caresses, the affection of her father, her beloved brothers, her darling sisters, did not however lose herself and replied : — « Let them come, I » shall satisfy them; my mother and I » have been those few days think- » ing over the means. » Santolo and Fallabacchio had at last come up to them; they cried out together : — « Give us » a gratuity; if not, we will not let » you pass; » and as the folks made no reply, Fallabacchio repeats, raising his voice : « If you do not give us a gra- » tuity, I take the bride across my » shoulders and carry her away, as a fox » whips off a chicken. » Those who

were accompanying the bride still kept silent, looking from one to the other; the chaste young girl with her cheeks bathed in real tears, which the more helped the disguise, appearing quite desolate (perhaps she was truly so for some other reason), takes a ring off her finger, not without much time and difficulty, in saying to them : — « Take this pledge and, for » God's sake, cause us no further misfor- » tunes; but be on your guard not to » lose it, it is the finest ring I have; » without further parley, she handed it to them. The merry fools, believing they had caught a fine fish, gather up their nets and all gay and sprightly were off to Signor Antonio dei Bardi's, where there were, as every evening, many gentlemen playing and passing the time. They enter splitting with laughter, kicking up so furious a dust, as nobody had ever witnessed before, intimating that they had just performed some wonderful cleverness, and showing the ring to those who had little or nothing to do. The latter, whether they knew but little about it, or to leave

them in their blissful ignorance, and that they should not soon get out of the embarrassment, or no matter why, told them the brilliant was a genuine one, that it was worth a host of crown pieces, and thus confirmed them in their first opinion. That their glory might be spread throughout the whole world and the high renown of so magnificent a result might be raised above the clouds, our heroes resolved to go that very night and make a display of their trophy in the best houses of Prato and to triumph publicly over it on the morrow in broad daylight.

Their first halt was at Monna Amorriscas's, a lovely and bewitching young woman, Fallabacchio's gossip and a near kin to the bride. There, with unparalleled fits of laughter, they related the adventure and exhibited the ring, at a distance, as people point to the Cintola. Every one said : « Come a little closer with » it; » but they exclaimed at them, saying : — « Ah! silly fools, you should » like us to lose it. » At last however,

they consented to let Monna Amorriscas view it closely; as soon as she got hold of it, she discovered that it had been fabricated at the expense of an old candlestick and that the stone proceeded from the Glass mountains. She began to laugh and after having kept them a good while on the roost : « By gad, » she says to them, « guard it most precious and » take the best of care not to lose it; you » would ruin Verdespina. — The deuce! » and what is it worth in your opinion, » Monna Amorriscas? » inquired Santolo. — « Indeed, the night is a bad time » for valuing jewels, especially when » they are of great worth, as this one is; » but approximately, by taking into » account both latten and glass, soldering, » edging, and denting, it is worth not » less than two farthings, perhaps three. » Santolo, assuming his serious air and snatching it out of her hands, began to exclaim : — « Oh! do you not see » how she imposes upon us? » But when he had the ring between his fingers, like a man who becomes wise after the acci-

dent, he perceived by its weight and color that he had been to catch partridges with an ox and began to puff and blow. — « You are on for jesting, » said Fallabacchio then; « do you not see how the gossip » is jeering us? Show it to me. Oh! did » I not say she is up for snaring us? » Bitch! what a beautiful ruby! what is » that I say? It is a cornelian stone! no, » no, dunce, it is a turquoise. In short, » be it whatever it likes, it is a superb » ring; I will go at once to a compa- » nion's and make him lend me a florin » on it, to buy the kids for the day after » to-morrow. What will it fall on? It will » be on a Saturday, they are fat. » Without further parley, he was off in all haste to a companion's shop, and assured himself that the ring was fit to be kept by for the day on which he would be getting his nurse married. Fallabacchio, and Santolo who followed after him, began to scream and threaten the clouds; they shouted out that they would by hook or by crook raise the expense next morning on the wedding attire, and Fallabacchio,

turning towards the goldsmith, says to him : « Do you think the objects are » fastened unto the wedding-presents? — » No, » replied the companion; « they » never fasten anything to them. — Good, » then; I will take the finest dress and » bordered napkins in them and make » them pay me two-fold. » Without further conversation, this new rendez-vous being agreed upon, they went to bed till next morning; but the hour for bringing the wedding-presents having arrived, the bride-groom, afraid they might come to carry on some more swaggering, arranged it in such a way that a few of his friends should retain them round a bottle of good Trebbiano, to prate, and so the presents reached the house without any hinderance. Thus made fools of for the second time, they went off to Grignano, to play lawn-tennis.

But Verdespina, ill satisfied because the joke stopped half-way, without going to the end, made her intention known to Monna Amorriscia, and the latter, most delighted, prepared beforehand what was

to be done. On Saturday morning, Verdospina sent word to Santolo and Fallabacchio that they had to give her back her ring, that she would give them a gratuity, and so open handed too that they might feast on two kids. The fellows would have willingly believed that she wanted to make a laughing stock of them, if certain folks, who got the hint, had not thought of whispering in their ears that Monna Amorriscia had changed their ring, that it was worth more than thirty crowns, they knew very well, that the bridegroom was acquainted with the story and was going to become really angry; that he wished for the ring and did not mean to carry on the joke. What the deuce will you say but they began to swallow it? They went off to the gossip and asked her if it was true she had changed the ring. She first took to laughing and, all in laughing, to deny it with those looks which people stick on when they want to jest in saying no; they were only the more certain that the gossip had trucked it and,

becoming very angry, cried out robber and almost called her names, how she had them made fools of by all Prato, how folks did not act in that manner, how she had to restore them the ring, otherwise they would lose patience. To irritate them still more, she held her tongue. Fallabacchio, raising his voice higher, began to say : « Gossip, give us » the ring; if not, I promise and swear » to you by this cross, » he formed a cross on the wall with a coal from the hearth, « I swear to you that I do tear » from you your watch chain to-morrow » morning, when you go to mass, » without having further respect for you; » I shall take it from off your neck, in » the very middle of the church. » Seeing how this went down to her liking and feigning she was taking the thing in bad part, Monna Amorriscia appeared full of ire and told them that she had not changed the ring to wrong them, still less to keep it, as they seemed to think, but simply to laugh over it a day or two with them, then to give it back to them.

Now, since they got angry, since they threatened her and made so much ado, she wished to treat them as they deserved. Consequently, let them not expect to have back the ring, unless they first pay down for two kids, and the fattest that could be found in the market this morning. Santolo and Fallabacchio, who saw her so in a rage and heard her speak thus, wished to set things aright, by means of kind words, but to no purpose; she left them to fight it out and entered her room in saying to them : « You have » understood me. »

The two fellows walked out quite melancholy and began to resolve on what they should do. At the same moment, the bridegroom sent them word that he wished by all means to have his ring and that they had only to request whatever they choose, that he was ready to please them, that what had been done up to then ought to suffice for them and that he was going to get vexed over it. Fallabacchio turned to Santolo : « The bridegroom » is right, » he says to him; « what the

» deuce is going to come of all this? Let
» us buy the two kids for the gossip, we
» shall ask her at the same time to sup-
» per and make peace. If the bridegroom
» then wants his ring, he must pay us
» for it, or we shall give him nothing. »
They stuck to this resolution, went to the
market, purchased two fat kids, brought
them to the gossip and said to her :
« Now, give us back the ring; here are
» the kids. » She answered them that she
would not fail to give it back to them,
but only on Sunday evening; let them
come to her house and feast on the kids.
What she was doing with them was, said
she, for their good, because she wished
also to invite the Verdespina and her
husband, who, in this way, would have
less trouble in satisfying them, and would
pay two-fold. They answered her that this
was a good idea, but that she ought to
send word previously to the husband to
let them alone and not to reclaim the ring
before the next evening. As to that, they
might leave her to herself, replied she,
and she well knew how to pacify the hus-

band. The jolly fools having gone away, Monna Amorriscas sent word to Verdespina that for the unravelling of the plot contrived among them, everything was ready, provided she came on the next evening to her house and brought her husband along with her; Verdespina had it replied that she should not fail. Monna Amorriscas invited, Sunday evening, a quantity of young women of her kindred, all of them pretty and comely, with their husbands, that the joke might be spread throughout the whole town and that they might be laughed at everywhere, at the same time that honor might be paid to the new bride, her relation; the latter came accompanied by her husband to Monna Amorriscas's, who offered them a very fine repast: Santolo and Fallabacchio were there. The supper over, Monna Amorriscas and Verdespina, desiring that nobody should ignore the joke played on Santolo and Fallabacchio and that they might be thoroughly mocked, related how the thing had happened; men and women, all, all began

to set up a clatter at the expense of the two fellows, who at first undertook to kick up a dust; but seeing the more they defended themselves, the more they were laughed at, they, like good humored fellows, joined in with the others on the laughing side, stating that after all it was not any great miracle that they were mistaken in matter of jewels, having never practiced the profession of goldsmith. But some say that Santolo did not laugh heartily; being more thoroughly duped than Fallabacchio, he took more of it to his own account.







MONNA FRANCESCA

falls in love with Fra Timoteo; while she is enjoying herself with him, Laura, her daughter, perceives it and fetches her sweetheart. The mother becomes acquainted with this and begins to declaim, but Laura by a nice discourse reduces her to silence, and quite ashamed of her disaster, she comes to an understanding with her daughter.

ROMANCE IX



YOU must know there was at Siena, in the Camporeggi quarter (the epoch is not so far back but that every one of you may remember it), a certain Monna Francesca of a pretty good popular family and sufficiently well off; she had remained widow with one daughter already ripe for marriage (in fact, she got her married a few months after to a certain Meo di

Mino da Rossia who, being occupied in the management of the magnificent Borghes' demesnes, then sovereign lord of the town, lived most of the time outside Siena) and a son who was scarcely seven years old. Being busy in bringing up her two children and unwilling to marry again, she lived very quietly. In the meanwhile, a Dominican Brother, a bachelor in theology, called Fra Timoteo, seeing she was pretty fresh and good looking, cast his eyes upon her. As, probably owing to the frightful discipline-lashes he used to lay unto his buff, the prolonged fastings he inflicted upon his stomach, his complexion was glistening to such a degree that in the heart of January you could have set fire to a match by applying it to his two rosy cheeks, the good lady, on seeing undoubtedly in him the man who suited best her quiet situation of widow, who would secretly remedy the privations of widowhood, thought he was just the thing for her. Whether it was from him or from her the first advances came, I

shall not state, considering that I know nothing about it; let it suffice for you that she became a near kin to the Lord God, and she so often went to confession, and stayed so willingly at the church San-Domenico, that the people proclaimed her in the neighbourhood as a half saint.

While things were going on as you have just heard, Laura (this was the name of Monna Francesca's daughter), had since long spied out, by many signs, her mother's wisdom, and unwilling to belie the beautiful proverb : *What is the offspring of the hen, must scratch the dunghill*, resolved to follow exactly her traces. She knew, in a little while, so well how to go about it that, while her mother was showing her conscience to the devout Monk, she was learning from a certain Sir Andreuolo Pannili, a law doctor, the conduct to be observed in the consummation of matrimony. It happened once, among other times, that the good widow having, about two o'clock at night, made her spiritual father come into her room, was unable to operate so secretly as her

daughter might not take the alarm; the latter, not believing herself bound to keep any longer on her guard against her, as soon as she was aware of the fact, got her little brother to fetch a certain Agnesa, their neighbour, who eagerly relieved with her mouth the wants of the poor lovers, and despatched her to bid the sweetheart come at once and see her. The gent, having received the summons, lost no time about putting in an appearance and, penetrating into her room by the usual way, laid himself down beside his darling in bed; but Laura, instead of arranging it so that her mother nor anybody else might hear them, began while speaking very loud to caress him most fondly, quite as if he had been her husband.

« O my dear soul, » she said to him, « you are a thousand times welcome! O » my sweet fresh cheeks, my ruby lips, » when shall I kiss you enough, so as to » grow weary of it, I will not say satiated! Never, I believe, were I to kiss » you all my life. » In pronouncing these words, she gave him such smacks, that

you might have heard them at Camollia (1). The Doctor being made acquainted with what was up, he too, did not fail on his part to do his duty, and there finally resulted such a sensation as made Monna Francesca's ears tingle. Attracted by this noise, she came gently, very gently to their room-door and ascertained that they were not alone making a hurly-burly with words. Like a woman who busies herself far more with the faults of others than with her own, she grew angry beyond all bounds and, driving the door in before her with unparalleled fury, entered, found Laura in bed, affronted her in such a rage that you would have said she was going to eat her up raw, and filed her off the prettiest beads of abuses that had been ever addressed to a prostitute. « Tell » me rather, you slut, » she exclaimed, « what I have just now heard you relating to yourself, so heartily? Ah! Laura, » Laura, is this the way, is this the way

(1) Quarter of Siena, at the other end of the town.

» virtuous girls conduct themselves? Are
» these the teachings I inculcated on
» you? Have I brought you up in this
» way? Have I ground you in such prin-
» ciples that you durst hurl this insult
» and so fine an honor right into my face?
» Have you seen me doing so much
» against myself? O God! whom do you
» then resemble? and yet they say: Such
» your children, such the wife you chose!
» O my husband! how happy you are to
» be dead before beholding with your
» eyes what mine behold to-day! Oh!
» sad life is mine! there is matter to ren-
» der the whole kindred contented, and
» your husband may rub his hands now,
» he who is so much in love with you!
» You should have at least been on your
» guard against doing such nasty things
» in my house and waited until your hus-
» band took you away, as he intends to
» do shortly. Away from here, slut, away,
» leave my sight; I will have you no
» longer for my daughter, you brazen-
» faced strumpet! O God! I could have
» really suspected it all, had I not been

» truly blind. But alas! how could I have
» believed such a thing from my daughter,
» when at the hour it is, now that I have
» heard it with my own ears and seen it
» with my eyes, I can barely bring myself
» to believe it? O God! my too ardent
» affection for thee, the too great a confi-
» dence I had, knowing what my own
» life was, caused me to see everything
» the wrong way. At present, I under-
» stand why the other morning at Santo-
» Agostino's, Monna Andreoccia warned
» me against allowing you like that to be
» strutting about at the feasts: she was
» acquainted with something, and this is
» all was missing, that people might prate
» about you throughout town! There is
» the reason of your so secret company-
» keeping with Agnesa; yea, there it is,
» there it is, unfortunately; but be sure
» of it, curse of God upon you, you shall
» pay me for it! Have I not perchance
» given you a worthy husband, as young,
» as merry as no matter what other
» woman's? Wait until he is back; I wish
» him to know all your mad pranks and

» chastise you for them with his own
» hand, as you deserve. »

While uttering these threats and many more besides, she caused a greater uproar than a poor female who would have lost her cock together with all her hens. Laura, who, all the while her mother was thus snubbing her, had remained with her eyes fixed on the ground, as one wholly confused, pretending to be greatly afraid, answered her : — « My dear little Mamma,
» I accuse myself before you for having
» done evil and beg pardon for God's
» sake ; I beseech you to excuse my youth,
» to have at the same time respect to
» mine honor and your own, and be good
» enough to forgive me for this time, to
» say nothing about it to my husband ; I
» swear to you through the love I bear
» him, never more to do the slightest
» thing against your will. This time, that
» God may forgive me my grievous sin,
» may withdraw me from out the jaws of
» Lucifer of Santa-Maria's of the Servites
» and remove from me the thorn I have
» in the very midst of my conscience, I

» wish by all means to make my confes-
» sion, before falling asleep again. Be
» therefore kind enough to go into your
» room and fetch me that holy man of a
» Monk whom you are keeping locked
» up; I intend that it be he who gives me
» absolution. » Think a while, Ladies, of
the state in which the poor mother was,
when she had heard a like language, and
whether she regretted to have made so
much ado about a fault of which she saw
herself so shamefully convinced. At the
moment, when, wishing to mantle her
confusion, she began to mutter I know not
what philastrocoles altogether out of
season, the opportunity seemed favorable
to Sir Andreuolo, who kept behind the
curtains to laugh at the adventure; he
guessed that this concerned him now, as
lawyer, to settle the question under litiga-
tion, and appearing unexpectedly, he said
to them : « Monna Francesca, what is the
» use of so many exclamations and stu-
» pefactions? If you have discovered your
» daughter with a young man, she has
» discovered you with a Monk; you are

» at a double game, let yourselves there-
» fore count twenty-four deniers for
» one half-penny. The best thing you can
» do, is to go back into your room with
» your Monk, while I shall stay here with
» my Laura, and we shall all four of us
» in holy concord, enjoy our loves. It
» will be practiced so secretly that nobody
» will ever be the wiser of it, whereas if
» you wish to commit a folly, you will
» throw so much meat on the fire that
» more than one batch of wood will be
» required to cook it, and the first to
» repent will be yourself. Be therefore
» wise; take the safe road when you can,
» and do not say afterwards: I had not
» been warned. » The poor widow knew
not what answer to make, she was so
much abashed, and she would have heart-
ily given all her pocket money to stea-
away without discoursing to the contrary.
At last, considering that she had been told
only what was true, she mumbled, while
blushing to the ears: « Since that is so
» and I can find no excuse, I shall not say
» another word to you, unless it be to do

» as you please. But I beseech you, good
» young man, let mine honor and my
» daughter's be in high recommendation
» in your mouth, since our bad luck has
» blinded us both. » Having pronounced
these words, the time seeming to her a
thousand years long till she separated
from them, she returned to her room, to
find Fra Timoteo. But the young man fol-
lowed behind her and never ceased until
he prevailed on her to consent and get
everything ready that they might take
supper together that very night, the whole
four, and might acknowledge one another
as relations, that each one might come
back and exercise his little affairs after-
wards more at his ease and without having
anything to fear from one another. The
holy concord operated so well, that the
two women were daily more contented.
It is true, indeed, that sometimes in the
morning while talking together, as it hap-
pens, of their sweethearts' exploits, they
discovered that very often the young
man had allowed himself to be surpassed,
and that by more than one discharge, by

the Monk, although the latter was growing rather old; so that Laura was not without bearing envy to her mother and made terrible rows with her Sir Andreuolo.





FRA SERAFINO

induces a Widow to endow a chapel ; her sons get under it, dissuade her from doing so, and give the Monk to understand that she has made a will, but they refuse to show it to him. The Monk cites them before the Vicar : they put in an appearance, produce a laughable will and load the Monk with confusion.

ROMANCE X



YOU must know that we meet in all human professions far fewer upright men than sordid men ; you will not then find it very strange that there are among the Monks but a pretty small number near the perfection which their rule imposes upon them, and that moreover Avarice,

which reigns sovereignly over all the courts of Princes, both spiritual and temporal, has desired a little corner within the cloisters of poor monastic friars.

There was at Novara, an extremely illustrious city of Lombardy, a very rich lady, called Madonna Agnesa, who was left a widow through the death of one Gaudenzio of the Piotti. He had left her, besides her marriage portion, which, according to the custom of these realms, was considerable, immense riches, investing her with their entire free disposal, on the condition that, without marrying again, she should attend to the education of the four sons he had by her. Gaudenzio was hardly dead, when news of the will thus covenanted reached the Father Guardian of the Convent of the Brothers of Santo-Nazaro, a little beyond the gate of Santo-Agabio, as he kept an eye out for this kind of things. His office was to see that not a petty widow should escape them, but should gird on the cord of the blessed and seraphic Saint Francis, and that, becoming one of their beguines, as-

sisting every day at their sermons, begging their prayers for her deceased ones, she might address to them in return nice pies in the Lombardy style; then that she should, in process of time, being inflamed with burning zeal for the pious works of the blessed Fra Ginepro or some of their other Saints, decide about founding in their church a chapel where they painted funny stories, such as when Saint Francis was preaching to the little birds in the desert, when he made the miraculous soup or when the Angel Gabriel brought him his sandals; all she lacked after that, was to endow it with a sufficiently round revenue, that they might be able to celebrate every year the feast of those sacred Stigmas, possessed of so many virtues, Lord my God! and to recite every Monday an office for her parents' souls, delayed or detained in the pains of Purgatory. But for the simple reason that they can not, owing to their profession of poverty, keep so much wealth as belonging to the Convent, they have lately devised a scheme of possessing it as cha-

pel endowments, sacristy stipends, and they think perhaps by this means to cheat Our Lord in the same way as they daily cheat men; they work themselves into the delusion that God does not see the depth of their intentions and knows not that if they act thus, it is because they envy and are jealous to the backbone of the loose habits of those big fat Monks who, without spending their lives bare-footed or in old brogues, to preach here and there, carry with them five pairs of pumps and, in beautiful Cordouan slippers, have only to rub their bellies within fine cells all wainscotted with cedar; who, if they are perchance obliged to go out of the Convent, jog along at their ease on strong backed mules or stout poneys, and who do not tire their minds too much by looking into the contents of a pile of books, for fear the science they might glean therein might elate them with pride, like Lucifer, and cause them to fall away from the monastic simplicity.

To return to the point, this devout Father Guardian scented out the Widow so

well and made such a dashing around her with his sandals, that she consented to become affiliated to the Third-Order, and the Monks got out of her a lot of good meals and new habits. This seemed to them as yet nothing or scarcely worth while, and they were all day long at her heels, reminding her of the article for the chapel. But the good lady, both because she knew she would be doing wrong by robbing her sons to bestow on the monks, and because she was rather stingy, as you women are all universally so, satisfied them only in promises but went no farther. While they were incessantly soliciting her and she feeding them on hopes, it happened that she fell dangerously ill and sent for Fra Serafino (this was the name of the Father Guardian of San-Nazaro), to hear her confession. He ran to her in all speed, and, as soon as he had heard her confession, seeing that the vintage-time had at last arrived, he told her, by way of an act of charity, that she should remember the salvation of her soul while she was still alive; that she

should not rely upon her sons, who were only awaiting her death in order to laugh at her; and that she should recall to mind Donna Lionora Caccia, the wife of Mister Cervagio, a Doctor by the bye, when she was once dead, there was not one of her sons who cared simply to light a candle for her, even on All-Souls day; that this was very little for her so rich, and beneficial not only to her own soul and those of her descendants, but also to the honor of her family; in short, he knew so well how to urge his reasons that the dying woman was almost resolved to say she would, and requested him to come back next day, when she would give a decided answer. In the meanwhile, one of her sons, the second youngest, called Agabio, having I know not how got a hint about what was up, advised his brothers of it, who, for greater certainty, thought it would be well, should the Monk return, if one of them hid himself, the following day, under the bed and listened to the whole agreement. In this way, on the next day, Fra Serafino

having come back to conclude the bargain, Agabio aided by his brothers slipped under his mother's bed and heard the Father Guardian, who did not think he was listened to, urge her so forcibly, unfold to her so many arguments, quote so many Doctors and put her into such a fright about the pains of Purgatory, that she resolved to bequeath two hundred pounds in ready cash for the erection and decoration of the chapel, a hundred more for altar-ornaments, vases and other necessary mass utensils, and for donation, under the reserve that a feast should be celebrated in it every year, besides a Dead-Office, and that a mass should be daily said in it, the half of an undivided demesne which she owned at Camigliano, near the pillory, which was worth in all more than three thousand pounds. After they had agreed upon the name of the chapel, the services and all that was wanted, the Monk went off. But as soon as he had scampered away, Agabio, got from under the bed, without his mother's perceiving it, related what he had heard to

his brothers, who, aided by a few relations, came to their mother and dissuaded her from such a project.

Agabio, being once certain that his mother would be satisfied to let the water follow its natural course, thought it would be well to make a laughing-stock of the Father Guardian ; he quickly called aside one of the footmen of the house and despatched him on his mother's part, to bid him to come no more to the house to fatigue her and talk again over what he well knew : her sons had had got under the scheme and had consorted, should he reappear, to play him an ugly trick. Let him nevertheless, remain tranquil : she would take care what they had agreed upon should be punctually done. From the moment he should learn that Our Lord would have disposed of her, he had only to go to Ser Tomeno Alzalendina's, to have him requested for the will, try and get it and then put the legacy into execution. The footman set out and delivered his errand in all haste, so that Fra Sera-

fino appeared no more ; but having soon learned that Madonna Agnesa, overtaken by I know not what accident, had given up her soul to God, he was quickly off to Ser Tomeno and asked him for the will. Ser Tomeno, being advised beforehand by Agabio of what he was to do, answered him unhesitatingly that he should present himself at Agabio's : this young man had the contents of the will communicated to him since the previous evening. The Monk therefore, without adding a word, went away to Agabio, from whom, after the compliments under the present circumstance, he requested to see the aforesaid will. Agabio made no other reply to his request, except that he was greatly surprised to see him inquiring for what did not concern him ; the Monk, wishing to answer I know not what, he bade him be off and mind his own business. The good Father did not in any way trouble himself about this reception ; he believed all the more that the will was only the more favorable to him, and without further wincing betook himself to a certain Mis-

ter Niccolo, attorney for the Convent, made a servant of his hand him two-pence halfpenny and most expressly recommended him this affair. Mister Niccolo, without casting a further thought over it, had Ser Tomeno at once summoned before the Vicar of the Bishop, as obliged to give a copy of the said will ; Ser Tomeno, having received the summons, ran off to Agabio's and related to him how the question stood. Agabio, who was awaiting only that, repaired to the Bishop's Vicar, who was a great friend of his, and informed him of all that had taken place up to the present, as well as of what he intended to do, if however it did not displease him. The Vicar, being of course the Monks' enemy, in his capacity of priest, assured him that he would be very glad of it ; and in this way on the next day, the day of putting in an appearance, there came Fra Serafino and his attorney, the both entreating that they should show them the will.

Agabio stepped forward at this request and said : « My Lord Vicar, I am very

» happy to produce it in presence of your
» Lordship; but on the condition that all
» its clauses be executed, in good and
» due form, by all those named therein,
» let them concern whomsoever and let
» those be called such or such a one. —
» The thing is clear, » replies the Vicar ;
« the law disposes that he who has the
» profits ought also bear the charges.
» Produce therefore the will ; justice will
» have it so. » Agabio, immediately pulling
a large roll of paper out of his pocket,
handed it to a notary of the bench telling
him to read it, which the notary set to do.
After having read the appointing of heirs
and a few other legacies mentioned in
order to inspire greater confidence in the
guest, the notary came at last to the part
concerning the Monk and which began
thus : « *Item*, for the safeguard of my
» children's goods and the salvation of
» all the widows of Novara, I wish that
» by these same children and their own
» hands, there be given to Fra Serafino,
» at present Guardian of the Convent of
» San-Nazaro, fitty lashes, the best and

» nicest laid on that they shall know how
» and be able to apply, that this Monk
» and his equals may long remember that
» it is not always advisable to wish to
» persuade silly women without judgment
» and poor bigots, to disinherit and ruin
» their children for the sake of enriching
» chapels. » Such fits of laughter arose
from all parts of the Tribunal, that the no-
tary could not finish his reading, and do
not ask me whether all those present be-
gan to make a fool of the poor Father
Guardian, who seeing himself stuck there,
with shame and affront, wished to retrace
his way back to the Convent, to very
quickly make his complaints to the Apo-
stolic See. But Agabio, seizing him by the
habit, and holding him fast, began to cry
out : « Hold, my Father ; where are you
» then going so fast ? I am quite disposed
» to fulfil, as to what concerns me, the
» clause of the will ; » and turning to-
wards the Vicar, without letting hold of
the Monk, whom he kept squeezed, he
added : « My Lord judge, have him stretch-
» ed on the rack, I am bent on fulfilling

» my obligation; otherwise, I shall com-
» plain of your Lordship and say you have
» not rendered me justice. » The Vicar
thought this was enough, if not too much,
considering, as he ought, the dignity of
the Monk and the Order of Minor Friars;
he turned to Agabio and, half laughing, said
to him : — « Agabio, suffice that you
» have shown your good will; Father
» Serafino, considering that this heritage
» or legacy would be burthensome on the
» Convent, refuses to accept it; since he
» refuses, you can not force him to it.
» Let him therefore go about his busi-
» ness. » And with the kindest words he
could find, he packed him off.

The Monk, as soon as he got leave,
went to the Convent, full of rage, and
remained therein a long while without
showing his nose, owing to his great
shame. He never again exhorted widows
to bequeath their goods to chapels, espe-
cially those who had grown up children,
he was so much afraid of the latter and
their threats, who forced him to silently

undergo so great an outrage. Yet, the Vicar had to repent for it : this joke cost him more than five hundred florins.

END.



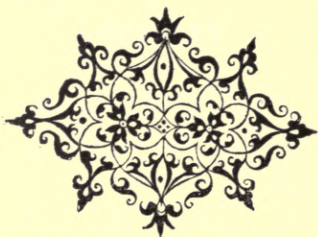


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